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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Research and Practice (ECRP), a peer-reviewed, Internet-only journal sponsored by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE), covers topics related to the development, care, and education of children from birth to approximately age 8. This issue of ECRP contains the following major articles: (1) "Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom: Possibilities and Pitfalls" (Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese); (2) "Starting School: Effective Transitions" (Sue Dockett and Bob Perry); (3) "Professional Growth Reconceptualized: Early Childhood Staff Searching for Meaning" (Alma Fleet and Catherine Patterson); (4) "The Synthesis of Writing Workshop and Hypermedia-Authoring: Grades 1-4" (Michael Seth Mott and Jeannine M. Klomes); (5) "Building Equitable Staff-Parent Communication in Early Childhood Settings: An Australian Case Study" .(Patrick Hughes and Glenda MacNaughton); and (6) "Purposeful Learning: A Study of Water" (Becky Dixon). The issue concludes with an ERIC database search on multicultural education and children's picture books and a description of new ERIC/EECE publications and activities. (LPP)

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an Internet journal on the development, care, and education of young children

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Examining Multicultural Picture Books for the Early Childhood Classroom: Possibilities and Pitfalls

Jean Mendoza & Debbie Reese
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Note: Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese raise potentially controversial issues in their discussion of multicultural picture books. The authors and the journal editors invite readers to be part of an ongoing electronic discussion of issues raised in this paper. By clicking on this "dialog box," readers may comment on the article. Selected substantive contributions will be posted on this Web site for further discussion. Please join us in this important discussion.

Abstract

Children's picture books have an increasingly significant place in early childhood classrooms. Picture books that depict the variety of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups within U.S. society (known generally as multicultural picture books) allow young children opportunities to develop their understanding of others, while affirming children of diverse backgrounds. This paper discusses the possibilities and the pitfalls involved in the selection of multicultural literature for use with young children, examines two books featuring Mexican American protagonists to illuminate issues and problems in the images the books present of Mexican Americans, discusses some contemporary theories on race as ways of understanding such issues and problems, and considers possible actions for early childhood educators and teacher education programs to take.

Introduction

Children's picture books have an increasingly significant place in U.S. early childhood classrooms. Fiction, poetry, and nonfiction offer young children a multitude of opportunities to gain information, to become familiar with print, to be entertained, and to experience perspectives other than their own. Picture books that depict the variety of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups within U.S. society (known generally as multicultural picture books) allow young children opportunities to develop their understanding of others, while affirming children of diverse backgrounds. In this paper, we will (1) discuss the possibilities, which we conceptualize as positive, and the pitfalls involved in the selection of multicultural literature for use with young children; (2) examine two books featuring Mexican American protagonists to illuminate issues and problems in the images the books present of Mexican Americans; (3) discuss some contemporary ideas about race as a way of looking at the possibilities and pitfalls of choosing multicultural picture books; and (4) invite further dialogue and action by early childhood educators and teacher education programs regarding race, children's literature, and young children.

Children's Literature and Early Childhood Education

The growing role of children's literature in the lives of young children may be seen in the numbers of books published per year. In 1940, 984 books for children were published in the United States. In 1997, there were 5,353 such books (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 2001). In a study of picture books reviewed or recommended in *Young Children* (the National Association for the Education of Young Children's practitioner journal), Reese (2001) found a similar increase. During the 9-year period from 1945 to 1954, 37 children's books were recommended, while 904 were recommended between 1990 and 1999. This increase reflects a growing awareness of what children's literature can bring to the early childhood classroom.

Uses of Children's Literature: Aesthetic, Psychosocial, and Instructional

Children's literature can serve several purposes, some of which are aesthetic, psychosocial, and informative/instructional.

Rosenblatt (1995) categorizes readers' involvement in a text along a continuum. At one end is aesthetic reading, in which the person is drawn into the story and participates through identification with characters. The primary goal is enjoyment or entertainment. At the other end of the continuum is efferent reading, in which the reader is primarily interested in gaining information. In their relationships with books, young children may operate all along Rosenblatt's continuum, using books for both enjoyment and learning.

Literature is also seen as having several psychosocial uses for young children. In general, literature is said to provide characters and events with which children can identify and through which they can consider their own actions, beliefs, and emotions. The characters and situations in books introduce children to what the world may look like through others' eyes and offer a chance to further construct their own views of self and the world. One important characteristic of high-quality children's literature, according to Temple, Martinez, Yokota, and Naylor (1998), is the degree to which it "tells the truth" about the human experience. "Moreover, the characters...are true to life, and the insights the books imply are accurate, perhaps even wise" (p. 10). Alison Lurie and others argue that these insights may not always be what adults want children to understand. In fact, children's literature can often be "subversive," celebrating "daydreaming, disobedience, answering back, running away from home, and concealing one's private thoughts and feelings from unsympathetic grown-ups" (Lurie, 1990). Traditional literature in particular, such as legends and fairy tales, is sometimes seen as resonating with common cross-cultural childhood psychological concerns (Bettelheim, 1977) such as abuse, abandonment, and coming of age.

Traditional literature is also seen as having a didactic purpose, at least in original form. Myths, sagas, and other aspects of oral traditions are said to have been vehicles by which any society would pass on knowledge, ideas, and admonitions to its children, in the absence of a writing system. Feminist scholarship has reframed many European fairy tales as carrying the culture's models for young women (Rowe, 1986; Lieberman, 1986). Contemporary educators in the United States sometimes use traditional literature as a window on other cultures, but this practice is seen as problematic (Hearne, 1993; Zipes, 1986). Nonfiction, or informational books, have openly didactic purposes: to foster an interest in inquiry and involvement in the world (McElmeel, 1995) or to inform, instruct, and enlighten (Freedman, 1992). Nonfiction literature is expected to make clear distinctions between fact, theory, and opinion. Scientific, mathematical, and historical content must be accurate, verifiable, and up to date; and stereotypes must be avoided (Elleman, 1992). An increasing number of informational books are written and illustrated in a manner that provides aesthetic as well as learning experiences.

Some critics, educators, librarians, and others involved with children and their books assert that literature (except for nonfiction) is art and need not be concerned too much with being verifiable. Others, who see interaction with literature as one potentially powerful factor in the child's construction of knowledge about people and the world, argue that some types of fiction should be held to standards of accuracy and authenticity similar to those for informational books. In line with this concern, some publishers have reissued children's classics such as Hugh Lofting's *Dr. Doolittle* and Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* having altered or removed racist portrayals of Africans. Interest in accuracy and authenticity led Betsy Hearne (1993) to develop a scale for evaluating source notes in books of traditional literature; the ideal source note is explicit about a story's origin. Historical fiction in particular is the site of heated disagreement over the degree to which writers are accountable for historical and cultural accuracy (for examples, see Kohl, 1995; Reese et al., 2001).

One of the most persuasive rationales for sharing literature with young children is that it benefits language and literacy development. For years, researchers, teacher educators, parent educators, and parents have recognized the value of reading to children, and numerous studies document the beneficial effects of reading to preschool children (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). For instance, Wells's (1985) correlational study on the effects of picture book reading found that the frequency of listening to stories between the ages of 1 and 3 years was significantly associated with literacy and oral language skills as measured at age 5 by the children's teachers. Textbooks for future educators often include statements such as: "Reading aloud to children is one of the most useful ways of introducing them to the act of reading" (Krogh, 1994, p. 410).

The term "emergent literacy" began to appear in the early 1980s, as researchers sought to reconceptualize what young children know about reading, writing, and print before they begin formal schooling. Children as young as 1 and 2 years old are in the process of becoming literate (Sulzby & Teale, 1991), and the period of emergent literacy is said to continue until children read and write conventionally. This process can take place in the home or in community, day care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, or formal kindergarten settings. The concept of emergent literacy casts the child as a "constructor of his or her own literacy" (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Children create meaning from environmental symbols such as McDonald's golden arches (Goodman, 1987), as well as the illustrations and conventional print found in books.

Contemporary recognition and appreciation of the child's emerging literacy is such that Saracho and Spodek (1993) assert, "All early childhood teachers, at every level, must now be considered teachers of reading, even if they do not offer formal reading instruction" (p. xi).

Picture Books for Young Children

Picture books are the genre of choice for sharing with young children, whether teachers read aloud or the children use them independently. Picture books cross genre boundaries and may also be considered fiction, poetry, informational, or traditional literature. In a textbook frequently used with undergraduate preservice teachers, Temple, Martinez, Yokota, and Naylor (1998) identify three types of picture books: (1) wordless books, which rely solely on illustrations to tell a story; (2) picture storybooks, in which illustrations and text work together to tell the story; and (3) illustrated books, in which the text supplies most of the information but the illustrations augment what is said or serve as decoration (p. 171).

Words and illustrations do not simply tell stories. Together in picture books, they also create potentially powerful images of human beings. (See Zipes's [1986] comparison of "Little Red Riding Hood" illustrations.) The child sees representations of people—male and female, adult and child—in illustrations that foster impressions of whatever sorts of people are being portrayed (Lukens, 1990). In a sense, then, any given picture book featuring people may have a didactic outcome, even if teaching was not the book's intent.

Multicultural Children's Literature

When teachers share books with young children, they offer, among other things, exposure to ways of thinking about other human beings. For the child, illustrations and text combine to create particular views of individuals as well as groups of people—complete with messages about what those people are like.

Prior to the 1960s, people who were not European or European American were virtually invisible in children's literature, or they were depicted in negative and/or stereotypical representations (Aoki, 1993; Nieto, 1997)—a trend Harris (1993a) calls "pernicious" (p. 60). This invisibility gained national attention in 1965 when the *Saturday Review* published an article by librarian Nancy Larrick titled "The All-White World of Children's Books."

Sociocultural changes during the 1960s and 1970s fostered renewed interest in literature for adults and children that reflected "the diverse life experiences, traditions, histories, values, world views, and perspectives of the diverse cultural groups that make up a society" (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 185)—in other words, "multicultural literature." Taxel (1995) describes a trend toward addressing "the interests, concerns, and experiences of individuals and groups considered outside of the sociopolitical and cultural mainstream of American society" (p. 155). Initially, European Americans were the exclusive producers of new images of people outside the mainstream. Through the work of individuals and of groups such as the Council on Interracial Books for Children (MacCann, 2001), this situation changed gradually—some would say glacially—in the ensuing four decades. With varying degrees of success, one can now find children's picture books written or illustrated, or both, by African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans. Interest has also grown in children's books with accurate, respectful portrayals of gay/lesbian people, women, people with disabilities, and religions other than Christianity. A great many of these books are put out by small presses and face barriers to wider use that will be mentioned later in this paper. Overall, however, critics still see much room for progress.

Sims Bishop (1997) sees a dual role for multicultural children's literature; it can serve as a mirror or a window. A child may see his or her own life reflected in a book or may have an opportunity to see into someone else's life. Historically, children's books have given European American middle- and upper-class children the mirror but not the window. They could see themselves in the stories they read and heard, but they were unlikely to see anyone much different from themselves. Conversely, children outside the mainstream have had few literary mirrors that affirm their identities, although they had plenty of windows on life in the dominant culture of the United States.

Good multicultural literature can benefit all children in an early childhood classroom. Teachers enhance children's budding understanding and empathy when they make a point of sharing books that accurately and positively portray the backgrounds of the families in the classroom and that extend children's awareness to the significant groups in their community and the wider world (Derman-Sparks et al., 1989, p. 12).

Literary Criticism and Multicultural Children's Literature

In *Playing in the Dark,* Toni Morrison (1990) undertakes an in-depth examination of the presence and absence of images of Africans and African Americans in the adult American literary canon. A related body of critical literature has developed that examines children's literature for bias, stereotyping, and other sociocultural misinformation. Taxel (1995) and others consider such criticism of children's books to be essential "[g]iven the complicity of children's literature, and the rest of society's cultural apparatus, in providing legitimacy for racial and gender-related injustice and oppression..." (p. 163).

These critics often focus on well-known children's books—including some winners of prestigious awards—to illuminate their points about Eurocentrism and related problems (Atleo et al., 1999; Moore & Hirschfelder, 1999; Slapin & Seale, 1998; Kohl, 1995). Using primary sources for historical and cultural information, they give voice to viewpoints not often heard in the world of children's literature. They raise issues of accuracy and authenticity, questioning the perspectives, and sometimes the motives, of European American authors and illustrators who tell stories about or on behalf of marginalized peoples. They also strive to enlighten the public about literature that offers accurate information and authentic insider perspectives.

This criticism is likely to be found outside the widely recognized journals. In fact, mainstream publications may be reluctant to include reviews that put forward what they consider "extraliterary" (i.e., political) criticism (Reese, 2000). In contrast, reviews in *Multicultural Journal, The New Advocate,* and *Multicultural Review* are likely to consider cultural and historical accuracy and authenticity in books they examine. A number of textbooks (Harris, 1993b; Lehr, 1995) with similar critical bent are aimed at future educators.

Common Pitfalls in Selecting Multicultural Books for Children

Popular but Problematic Books: The First Pitfall

Limited availability of criticism that addresses accuracy, authenticity, and related problems often leads to a major pitfall for teachers seeking multicultural books. Teachers are sometimes caught by the unexamined assumption that a book is multicultural and worthwhile if it has non-European-American characters or themes and is critically acclaimed in well-known journals. For example, Native American scholars Reese and Caldwell-Wood (1997) found several problems when they examined popular picture books written and illustrated by European Americans in which Native American people or ideas play a central role. They note that in these books, the texts and illustrations together present a set of images of Native Americans, and thus a particular way of thinking about them, that is inaccurate and potentially misleading. The books in question received favorable reviews in *Horn Book* and other mainstream journals, and they have enjoyed years of popularity.

One such book is the award-winning *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky,* which features illustrations by contemporary European American illustrator Susan Jeffers and text attributed to Seattle, a 19th-century leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish people of the Pacific Coast of North America, who was known to his people as Sealth. In 1992, it was among the top-selling books in the country—a rare achievement for a children's book. Its strong message of environmental consciousness appears to be the basis for its continuing broad appeal. Native American reviewers have, however, identified significant problems with the text and with the illustrations (Seale, n.d.; Reese & Caldwell-Wood, 1997).

The text of *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* has an interesting history. According to a 1993 memorandum from the Washington/Northwest Collections office of the Washington State Library (see Appendix I), at least four versions of the speech attributed to Seattle have appeared through history. In January of 1854, he spoke at length during negotiations involving the Suquamish, the Duwamish, and the U.S. government. Historians agree that the speech was translated into Chinook jargon "on the spot" since Seattle did not speak English. The first print version of what he said was not published until October 29, 1887, in a *Seattle Sunday Star* column by Dr. Henry A. Smith, a witness to the 1854 speech who had reconstructed and translated the speech from his notes. In the late 1960s, poet William Arrowsmith rewrote the speech in a somewhat more contemporary style, though it is still similar to Smith's version (Ellen Levesque, personal communication, September 29, 1993).

Later, Ted Perry created another version for "Home," a historical program about the northwest rain forest televised in 1971 (Jones & Sawhill, 1992). This version was constructed as if it were a letter to President Franklin Pierce, though "no such letter was ever written by or for Chief Seattle" (Ellen Levesque, personal communication, September 29, 1993). A shortened edition of the "letter" was exhibited at Expo '74 in

Spokane, Washington.

At the end of *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky,* Susan Jeffers writes, "The origins of Chief Seattle's words are partly obscured by the mists of time." She mentions Smith's version and states that, like Joseph Campbell and unnamed others, she has adapted the message. Readers and listeners are left with the impression that the book offers perhaps an abridged version of the actual speech. The Suquamish tribe's Web site (http://www.suquamish.nsn.us/) reproduces the 1887 version, which addresses with great depth of feeling the state of Native-White relations in that place and time. In it, Seattle reluctantly, and perhaps with some anger, agrees that he and his people will move to a reservation, on the condition that they be able to visit their ancestors' graves without interference. Environmental responsibility does not appear to be the topic.

At some point after the first edition, copies of *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* began to feature dust jackets with a statement from Jewell Praying Wolf James, "lineal nephew of Chief Seattle," saying that "....In *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky,* Chief Seattle's words have been transformed into an experience children of all ages and localities can use...."

The transformation of Seattle's words in the book exemplifies a problem Native American scholars, critics, and activists frequently identify: the co-opting of Native voices by non-Native writers. The several European Americans, including Jeffers, who have seemed to act as conduits for Seattle's words have in fact altered his original message considerably. Valuable and heartfelt though its environmental message may be, and despite the apparent support of Seattle's descendant, *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* is seen as an example of how Native people's words have been obscured through appropriation.

Native American reviewers also note problems with the illustrations in *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky.* Counting the cover and end papers, there are 16 paintings. Horses figure prominently in 8 of these. Seattle himself was not from a horse culture. The Suquamish and Duwamish homeland is the northwest coast of the United States, and their traditional clothing, homes, and means of transport reflect that location.

Jeffers's illustrations, however, frequently represent Plains cultures. Current book jackets feature a quote from Jeffers: "My aim...was to portray people and artifacts from a wide array of nations because the philosophy expressed in the text is one shared by most Native Americans." Without a note in the text explaining which cultures are portrayed in each picture, however, young readers have no way to know that Seattle's people did not wear large feathered headdresses and fringed buckskin, live in tipis, and spend a lot of time on horseback. Long-standing stereotypes about Native dress and lifeways are thus reinforced (Reese & Caldwell-Wood, 1997).

Moreover, several illustrations, including the cover, show Native people as partially transparent, ghost-like figures. In contrast, the blue-eyed boy on the cover looks solid and lifelike, as does a group that appears to be a modern European American family at the end of the book. In combination with the fact that all Native people are represented in historical traditional rather than contemporary clothing, this portrayal suggests that Native Americans, in contrast to European Americans, no longer exist as a viable people. They have vanished and are only memories or spirits. Thus *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* is not only seen as historically inaccurate in attributing its words to Chief Seattle; it also is viewed as perpetuating common visual stereotypes of Native Americans.

Reese and Caldwell-Wood also critique authenticity in *Arrow to the Sun* by Gerald McDermott (1978) and *Knots on a Counting Rope* by Bill Martin and John Archambault (1987), illustrated by Ted Rand. They are not alone in their criticism (Slapin & Seale, 1998). In *Arrow to the Sun,* author/artist Gerald McDermott misrepresents Pueblo social life, religious beliefs, and ceremonial practices (Reese & Caldwell-Wood, 1997). For Pueblo people, kivas are places of ceremony and instruction, not places of trial, but in *Arrow to the Sun,* the protagonist goes through a series of trials in the kivas. Readers may thus be misinformed about Pueblo beliefs. Furthermore, Perry Nodelman (1988), who is otherwise not especially critical of the book, notes that McDermott's uses of line, shape, and color differ in important ways from authentic Pueblo kiva art (pp. 94-95). This remaking of traditional art is visually engaging (it won a Caldecott Medal), but it fails to reflect the reality of either Pueblo design or religious belief (Reese & Caldwell-Wood, 1997, p. 175).

In *Knots on a Counting Rope,* Ted Rand's illustrations suggest primarily that the story is set in the Navajo nation, but his work shows a mix of material culture from several different nations. For example, traditional Navajo men in the story are shown with hairstyles typical of the Atsina, Blackfeet, Mandan, and Piegan nations. Also, Pueblo people are shown at a horse race wearing traditional ceremonial clothing that would be inappropriate for such an occasion (Reese & Caldwell-Wood, 1997, p. 177). Many readers have no way of knowing how to identify such problems and are left with misinformation about several Native cultures, while Native readers from those cultures are confronted with the discomfort of being misrepresented.

The responses of Native critics to these three books suggest that neither critical acclaim nor representations of cultures other than European American can guarantee that a book is good multicultural literature. Regardless of how engaging the stories are, or how important their themes, even their subtle inaccuracies may contribute to cultural misunderstanding and to potential discomfort for children whose cultures are inaccurately portrayed. Both the mirror and the window are thus distorted.

Two More Pitfalls in Selecting Multicultural Children's Books

Observers of early childhood classrooms notice two other problems that frequently occur when educators look for multicultural picture books. One is the assumption that a single book about a group can adequately portray that group's experience. We see this situation, for example, in a classroom where observance of African American History Month begins and ends with reading aloud from a book about Dr. Martin Luther King.

The other pitfall is the mistaken belief that one can easily find a wide range of good-quality multicultural literature in libraries and bookstores, so that one has only to visit either venue to locate authentic and accurate representations of non-mainstream groups. Such books exist in growing numbers, but they are not so readily available as one might hope.

The following analysis of two picture books featuring Mexican Americans leads into discussion of both of these pitfalls.

Picture Books Depicting Mexican Americans: Background Information

After the 1990 census, Mexican Americans were identified as the fastest-growing ethnolinguistic group in the United States. At that time, they constituted 5% of the country's entire population and 60% of the Hispanic-origin peoples in the United States (Barrera, Liguori, & Salas, 1993, p. 207). These figures are not, however, reflected in the number of children's books portraying Mexican American people. According to a study by Barrera and Garza de Cortes (1997), the annual average number of Mexican American children's books has risen from approximately 6 between 1940 and 1973 to 19 in the period between 1992 and 1995 (pp. 129-130).

In the following two sections, we consider two picture books with main characters who are Mexican American: *A Day's Work* by Eve Bunting (1994), illustrated by Ronald Himler, and *A Gift from Papa Diego* by Benjamin Alire Saenz (1998), illustrated by Geronimo Garcia. For each book, the plot is summarized and the text/illustration relationship examined to find what each book offers children in the way of a mirror or a window on Mexican American cultural experience.

A Day's Work

When *A Day's Work* begins, Francisco and his grandfather stand with other day laborers in a parking lot, waiting for work. Francisco is a boy of indeterminate age, perhaps between 8 and 10. In the second paragraph, he reveals three facts to this group of strangers: first, that his father has died, leaving his family in financial trouble; second, that his grandfather has recently arrived in the United States to help them; and third, that he plans to use his own English skills to help his Spanish-speaking grandfather find work.

Without telling his grandfather, Francisco decides to lie to a potential employer about his grandfather's skill as a gardener. He and his grandfather hurry to the employer's van, and the boy pushes away another man who tries to get in with them. The employer, Ben, takes them to an embankment to pull weeds and drives away. The two work all day in the hot sun. As they are congratulating themselves on a beautiful job, Ben returns and is outraged to find that they have pulled all his ice plants and left the weeds. Over Francisco's protests, Abuelo offers to repair the damage and remove the weeds without pay. Ben sees that Abuelo is honorable, allows them to come back the next day, and hints that he might hire the grandfather for more than just day labor. Reflecting that "he had begun to learn the important things, too" (p. 32), Francisco takes his grandfather's hand and leads him homeward through a golden cityscape.

Himler's watercolor and gouache illustrations are expressive and evocative, with a kind of gravity that sometimes hints at threat or overwhelming situations. In these illustrations, children see Mexican Americans who:

- Wait for work
- Scramble for work
- Lie to get work
- Push others out of the way to get work
- Are taken somewhere to work
- Work close to an area of high-priced homes

- Work hard and make a serious mistake
- Rest after working, not knowing they have made the mistake
- Are scolded by an employer
- Feel ashamed, dismayed, at fault
- Seek to correct the mistake
- In adulthood, assert moral leadership
- Are allowed by the employer to correct their mistake
- Face the consequences of their actions, thereby winning the employer's respect
- Are at a disadvantage if they do not speak English
- In childhood, mediate between adults who speak English and those who speak Spanish
- Walk home together
- Are males in a male work world

A Day's Work is entirely in English, with the exception of the words abuelo, senora, gracias, bueno, and two two-word phrases. The text refers to Abuelo's having come from Mexico but does not specify what part of the country. There is reference to the tortillas Francisco's mother sends for their lunches and to the chorizo the boy wants to buy with their earnings. Abuelo praises Francisco's English skills. We see the kind of role reversal many immigrant families experience, in which a child who is able to speak English becomes a go-between for the family and the dominant culture (Wong Fillmore, 1991). One also sees the boy taking the lead in finding work, to the point where he lies and pushes away a full-grown man in order to get it. Although Francisco's mother is mentioned, readers see and hear only males in this representation of Mexican Americans—hard-working manual laborers.

A Gift from Papa Diego

A Gift from Papa Diego is the story of 6-year-old Diego, who lives in El Paso, Texas. He loves and identifies closely with his paternal grandfather, who lives far away, across the border in Chihuahua. This book is a bilingual parallel book; each page has both English and Spanish versions of the unfolding story. Little Diego lives with his parents and his teasing older sister in a house with a yard. He wants nothing more than to be with his abuelo on his 7th birthday. When a conversation with his father shows that he is not likely to get that wish, Little Diego begs for a Superman costume because he believes it will help him fly to Papa Diego. On his birthday, his family wakes him with a traditional song and he goes off to school imagining how he will fly to Chihuahua if only he receives that costume as a gift. That evening, his wish for the costume comes true, but his hopes are dashed when it does not help him fly. He retreats to his room. When his father invites him to rejoin the family, he does—and finds Papa Diego in the kitchen. Their reunion is joyful.

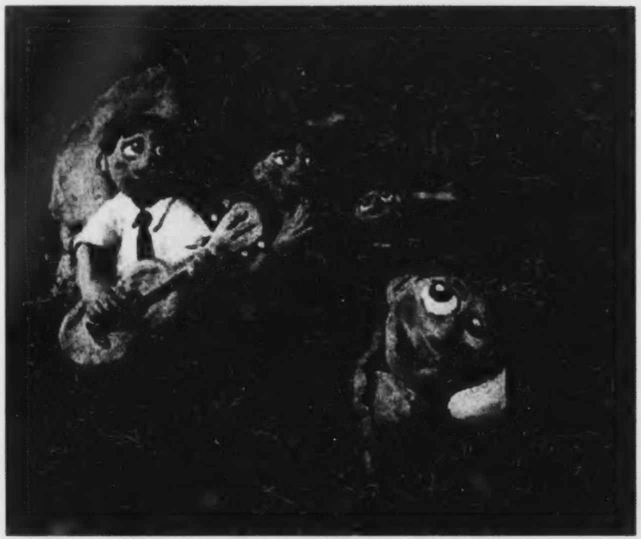

Illustration from *A Gift from Papa Diego*
(Copyright 1998 Geronimo Garcia. Reprinted with permission.)

At the end of the book are a page of notes about the places in the book, a glossary of Spanish terms, and an author-illustrator biography page. The illustrations are photographs of three-dimensional painted terra cotta creations. The mood is light, cheerful, but with a solid, substantial feeling. Children who look at these pages see Mexican Americans who:

- Think about things and explore the world
- Have father-son talks about family issues
- Hug each other
- Wear a tie to work
- Read
- Imagine and daydream
- Long to cross a border that separates them from loved ones
- Have family conversations while preparing food
- Experience sibling rivalry
- Play the guitar and sing to a loved one
- Greet each other with affection
- Act on a mistaken idea, with no harm done
- Do kind things for others
- As adults, are sources of love and guidance
- As children, play, go to school, and interact with family members
- Eat together as a family
- Are in all stages of life: infant/child/parent/grandparent
- Are female, are male
- Write books or illustrate them

A Gift from Papa Diego contains detailed, culturally specific information about language and customs, both in the story and in the glossary at the end of the book:

- the Spanish text and the Spanish phrases embedded in the English text,
- the mention of four specific foods,
- family discussions of Chihuahua and the U.S-Mexican border, and

- the special birthday song Little Diego's family sings.

All are cultural markers, indicators that in fact this story is about a Mexican American family. Males and females alike have important roles. The story seamlessly shows how central their culture is in their daily lives.

A Day's Work integrates a few Spanish words and refers to two specific foods. It does not mention a specific area of Mexico or relate specific customs (such as the birthday song in *Papa Diego*). It counters the "lazy Mexican" stereotype and offers a look at the socioeconomic problems Mexican American immigrants often face, particularly those who do not know English. Its principal focus seems to be on the moral lesson about honesty in the context of working to survive.

The Second Pitfall: Believing a Single Book Is Adequate

Comparison of the two books shows what a difference an insider perspective can make. It is in the authors' approaches to language that the contrast is most apparent. With text in two languages and embedded references to the desirability of speaking both, *Papa Diego* overtly supports—even invites—dual-language fluency. In *A Day's Work*, Francisco is praised for his English skills, and Abuelo "doesn't speak English *yet*" [italics added]. None of the employers, including Ben, seems to know any Spanish. Spanish fluency is presented as unimportant or even unnecessary. In fact, not knowing English is implicitly the root, so to speak, of the trouble Francisco and his grandfather have. Abuelo cannot tell that Francisco has lied to persuade Ben to hire them, and he cannot communicate with Ben about the gardening job. He is completely dependent on his grandson to negotiate these transactions. Bunting's portrayal of Abuelo's predicament, intentionally or not, is situated within the politicized discourse on language in the United States.

A Day's Work is a socially conscious morality tale, presented as a story about a boy and his grandfather. Every major review of *A Day's Work* stresses the moral lesson about not telling lies and about making reparations after creating a problem. Teachers report using the book specifically to generate discussion about honesty. Bunting is known for her portrayals of people, particularly people of color, who live in poverty; it seems likely that in *A Day's Work* she means to make a statement (arguably a positive one) about Mexican Americans in U.S. society. *A Gift from Papa Diego,* on the other hand, is a story about a boy and his grandfather—a story about love and familial devotion. Its picture of Mexican American experience is both complex and positive.

While teaching a children's literature class, we had a conversation with a Latina student who objected to *A Day's Work.* She felt that its outsider perspective resulted in images that fed into the stereotype of Mexican American men as manual laborers. Although the book seemed sympathetic, it still made them none too bright. Not being able to tell a weed from a desirable plant, she said, made Francisco and his grandfather look unnecessarily and unrealistically stupid. She asserted that a Mexican American child reading or hearing this book would likely feel embarrassed. Unimpressed by the fact that *A Day's Work* was named "A 1994 Americas Commended Title" by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs, she decided its problems outweighed any merits it had, and she would use several other books in her classroom instead (A. Herrera, personal communication, March 23, 2000). Whether or not one agrees with this future teacher's rejection of *A Day's Work*, her response shows awareness of critical issues and a commitment to providing authenticity and accuracy.

She also avoids the pitfall of assuming that a single book can adequately portray any group's experience. We would not propose that *Papa Diego* alone is adequate to portray Mexican Americans for young children, of course—Little Diego's family's white-collar lifestyle is by no means the whole story of Mexican American life. One would need to seek out other titles to create a collection that provides an adequate window and an undistorted mirror.

Availability: A Third Pitfall

Mention of the search for titles leads to another pitfall of selecting multicultural picture books: the notion that accurate and authentic books with insider perspectives are readily available. Recognition and availability are significant factors for teachers seeking to use multicultural children's books. Availability has little to do with literary content but may affect whether a teacher even knows a book exists.

For instance, we had the following experiences when looking for copies of *A Day's Work* and *A Gift from Papa Diego:*

- The local library system had four copies of *A Day's Work*, all of which were checked out until the following week. Two nearby towns also had copies on the shelf.
- The local library had one copy of *A Gift from Papa Diego*, which was on the shelf and had never been checked out.
- The person who answered the phone at a local bookstore exclaimed, "Beautiful book!" when asked if they had a copy of *A Day's Work*. They had more than one copy in stock. She did not need to look up this information in the computer.
- The same bookstore employee had never heard of *Papa Diego*. She looked it up in the computer and said, "We don't stock it, but I can order it for you."
- Both titles were available from online bookseller Amazon.com. As of this writing, the sales ranking of *A Day's Work* was 3,822. *Papa Diego* ranked far behind at 243,386.

These experiences are by no means unique. Nor are they surprising, given the nature of the publishing and book-selling businesses. Eve Bunting's position in the world of children's literature is such that her books gain instant recognition. She has published over 100 books from the 1970s to the present. Ronald Himler is also well known; he sells his book illustrations on his Web site. Bunting and Himler do their work for major publishing houses. *A Day's Work* is put out by Clarion Books, a division of publishing giant Houghton Mifflin Company.

Benjamin Saenz and illustrator Geronimo Garcia do not garner the same recognition. *Papa Diego* is the first children's book for Saenz, primarily a writer of poetry and adult fiction. Garcia works as a commercial artist in Texas. Cinco Puntos Press, their publisher, is a small press with deep connections to Latina/Latino communities. In 1999, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) rescinded grant money promised to Cinco Puntos Press to assist with publishing a translation of *The Story of Colors* by Subcomandante Marcos, controversial leader of the Zapatista resistance in Chiapas, Mexico (Chouteau, 1999). A private foundation subsequently supplied money for the book. Cinco Puntos has since put out another book by Marcos with funding from the same foundation (Byrd, 2000; http://cincopuntos.com/colors.html).

Both *Papa Diego* and *A Day's Work* were favorably reviewed in *Horn Book* and other major publications. A librarian at the local library was impressed enough by *Papa Diego* to order a copy, but it remained on the shelf while all copies of *A Day's Work* were in use. A local bookstore stocked *A Day's Work,* but not *Papa Diego.* If the book is not visible, despite positive reviews, potential buyers will not be able to browse through it during their selection processes, and they are unlikely to know it exists.

A Fourth Pitfall: Time

Although the possibilities of using good multicultural literature in the classroom can be exciting, teachers can feel overwhelmed by the prospect of finding and evaluating the books. They do not want to offend anyone, nor do they want to harm any of the children they teach, but they worry they might inadvertently select and share inappropriate books. Typically, teachers' days are already busy and even fragmented; any new task, however worthwhile, can appear monumental.

Reliable, in-depth background information about the diverse groups and cultures in the United States is essential to evaluating multicultural children's literature. Unfortunately, such information may not have been part of teachers' basic elementary and secondary education, nor part of their everyday experience. As a result, many teachers find themselves trying to construct a complex new knowledge base in their adulthood. In the process, they may also need to deconstruct misinformation and biases they have absorbed (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2001), which adds an emotional challenge to the problem of finding time to locate and use available resources for helping children learn about other cultures.

We have discussed four problems teachers may encounter when seeking multicultural picture books for young children. Highly acclaimed books that portray groups other than European Americans, such as the Native American themed books mentioned earlier, may be criticized for perpetuating stereotypes and mistaken ideas. Similarly, as shown in the discussion of two books about Mexican Americans, a single book is unlikely to give an adequate picture of any given culture. Third, a teacher seeking high-quality multicultural books may be hampered by lack of author/illustrator recognition and lack of access to small presses with tiny marketing budgets. Time is the final pitfall; teachers' busy schedules can make the already challenging task of finding and evaluating good multicultural children's literature seem overwhelming.

Educators and preservice teachers can keep in mind that learning how to recognize and share good multicultural literature with children is a process, as is learning about people different from oneself. Having undertaken it, they can expect to make mistakes or errors in judgment. When that happens, they can acknowledge the errors and use them to inform their future decisions.

Theories about Race as Lenses on Selecting Multicultural Children's Literature

Educators and others who share literature with young children are often concerned about the pitfalls we have mentioned. They may wonder what might make teachers so vulnerable to the pitfalls we have described. They may question why many books with stereotyping, bias, and inaccuracies are still being published and circulated, while titles with unbiased, accurate representations may go unrecognized. They may also ask what might be behind the frequent failure of reviewers and award committees to note problems with accuracy and authenticity.

In this section, we employ some of the contemporary theory and scholarship about race and racism to address some of the common concerns educators and others raise regarding the pitfalls involved in selecting good multicultural children's literature.

Vulnerability to Errors in Selecting the Literature

Those who want to select good-quality multicultural literature for children may wonder why they and their colleagues are vulnerable to the pitfalls described here. The answer may lie in factors that have roots in childhood.

The value of diversity may not have been recognized within many communities, particularly within schools, until recently. Even now, textbooks may do little to advance multicultural awareness (Meltzer, 2001; Loewen, 1995; Slapin, 1995). Multiculturalism and the implementation of an anti-bias curriculum have been significant currents of reform in early childhood education in the past decade. As a result, some teachers may find themselves trying to construct a complex new knowledge base within a short time, either in teacher education programs or in classrooms with diverse populations. The anti-bias curriculum (Derman-Sparks et al., 1989) has its roots in a theory that oppressions such as racism and sexism arise from and are perpetuated by ignorance about and fear of difference. It takes an activist stance on bias, justice, and fairness, and it emphasizes the relationship between adult and child in the early childhood setting as the site of social change. The anti-bias paradigm assumes that modeling, intervention, and teaching can move children toward attitudes they need to get on well in an increasingly diverse world. It places the teacher in a position to critically examine pedagogy and the classroom environment, and to make changes that affirm diversity and help children resist bias.

Teaching in the anti-bias paradigm carries considerable responsibility. It is the individual educator who decides how to intervene when children exhibit bias, who selects the literature, who directs children's attention toward (or away from) images that further their understanding of other people and themselves. In the process, teachers may need to deconstruct misinformation and bias they have accumulated, adding an emotional challenge to the problem of finding time to locate and use resources that help prepare young children for life in a diverse world. Statistics show that, nationally, the majority of young women and men in early childhood teacher education programs are European American, disproportionate to the diversity their classrooms will present. These future teachers are likely to come from environments that did not provide the opportunity, the necessity, or the tools for critical thinking about constructions of difference, bias, and race. They may believe that they do not "have culture"—that "culture" is an attribute of marginalized groups.

Along with accurate and unbiased information about the diverse groups (including European American cultures) within society, "race consciousness" is viewed by some theorists and scholars as an essential component of being able to identify and eliminate racism in its various contexts (Sheets, 2000, p. 16). (Racial identity development among other groups, such as "Black racial identity" [Sheets, 2000, p. 16] have also been explored, and may also have a bearing on how a teacher selects children's literature for classroom use.) Peggy McIntosh's (1998) "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" urges European Americans to critique the unspoken benefits of being White, most of which are assumed to be "normal" parts of life. Racial identity theorists Lawrence and Tatum (1998) have proposed that there is a developmental continuum of awareness in Whites' racial identity and related behavior, which can serve as a tool for critical appraisal of individual beliefs and attitudes. Some contemporary narratives may support this view, including those by Jewish American teacher and author Vivian Paley (1999, 2000), which highlight changes in her understanding of herself and the children and adults with whom she comes in contact.

It has been argued, then, that factors such as schooling that lacks salient information about the diversity of U.S. society, and that instead presents bias and misinformation; "White privilege," which obscures the real meaning of race in American life; and racial identity development, which reflects an individual's level of awareness about the role of race in his or her life and the wider world, all affect cultural awareness and understanding. These in turn affect how an individual interprets and uses children's literature. Teachers may be less vulnerable to the pitfalls if they are aware of deficiencies in their schooling, of the nature of White privilege, and of their own racial identity development.

Continuing Publication and Circulation of Books with Problematic Images

Teachers and others who want to select literature with strong authentic and accurate images of people from all groups in society often ask why authors and publishers continue to put out new books with problematic images, and why such books continue to circulate while titles with unbiased, accurate representations may go unrecognized.

Another developing theoretical perspective offers a possible explanation for such phenomena. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) and William F. Tate (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) use critical race theory (CRT) as a framework for discussing the impact of race and racism in all aspects of education. CRT has its roots in critical legal studies, which examine extralegal social, economic, and political factors that affect the legal system and result in unequal treatment under the law. CRT challenges the dominant view that White European American experience is or should be the normative standard; it is presented as a form of oppositional scholarship that is grounded in the ways people of color in the United States have experienced racial oppression. It incorporates the use of literary narrative and storytelling in challenging the ways race is constructed in society (Villenas, Deyhle, & Parker, 1999). Delgado (1995) describes the endemic nature of racism in American society. It is not a series of isolated incidents, but is embedded, institutionalized—deeply ingrained and sometimes blatant yet often so subtle that the society's members cannot see it. Critical race theory asserts that racism in the United States privileges persons of European background, with class and gender as additional factors. In effect, people of the mainstream learn from early on not to recognize racism or other oppressions, and to ignore or dismiss voices raising such issues. Thus myths of European American (White) superiority and "normality" are maintained.

Hibbitts (1994) views language (particularly metaphor) and other visual imagery as being manipulated to perpetuate the status quo in the field of law; his observations may have implications for studies of any medium employing words and visual images, including children's literature. Critical theorists McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) point out that members of minority groups in the United States tend not to have central control over the production of images of themselves. According to CRT, then, bias and cultural misinformation are present in children's literature in part because people outside the mainstream are not the ones creating the images; members of the dominant culture are creating representations based on their own mistaken assumptions of what the "others" are like.

What will be published, who will illustrate it, and how it will be marketed are all decisions that, historically and currently, rest primarily with European Americans, who own the largest publishing houses and continue to dominate the key decision-making positions. According to CRT, they are not likely to recognize or acknowledge the roles race and privilege play in the choices they make, and change comes "only when there is some perceived benefit" for those who hold the power (Asch, 2000). Decisions of authors and publishers figure prominently in Melissa Kay Thompson's (2001) "A Sea of Good Intentions: Native Americans in Books for Children," an example of how legal scholarship and literary criticism may inform one another regarding race and bias. Thompson draws parallels between bias in specific children's books (including popular contemporary literature) and bias in specific encounters Native Americans have had with the legal system, asserting that the court decisions and the books reflect the same underlying racism and support for the idea of White superiority.

Reviews and Awards That Fail to Acknowledge Inaccuracy and Inauthenticity

People seeking good multicultural literature often find that reviewers and award committees do not take into account issues of cultural and historical accuracy and authenticity.

Critical race theory and racial identity development theory may again offer insights into this situation. Criticism of children's literature, too, has historically been the domain of European Americans. Review journals such as *Horn Book* and *School Library Journal* play an important role in whether or not a book is recognized. The major journals are headed by European Americans, though certainly in recent years, these journals have sought out a more diverse group of reviewers and critical voices. They have also reviewed a number of multicultural books. Even so, mainstream critical favor sometimes falls upon a "multicultural" book that is subsequently panned by reviewers from the group being portrayed. Oyate, an organization that reviews and provides insider perspectives on Native Americans in literature, critiques several books on their Web site that found favor with mainstream reviewers (http://www.oyate.org/books-to-avoid/index.html).

Works by European American writers and illustrators continue to dominate the lists of winners of the two oldest prestigious awards—the Caldecott and Newbery Medals. Some of the winners have been later criticized for racist content (as well as sexism and other problems). A slowly growing field of prizes has been intentionally created to bring attention to works of multicultural literature, though some objections have been made to such awards (Aronson, 2001). The Coretta Scott King Award (http://www.ala.org/srrt/csking/), the Tomás Rivera Award (http://www.schooledu.swt.edu/Rivera/mainpage.html), the Pura Belpré Award (http://www.ala.org/alsc/belpre.html), and the New Voices Award (http://www.leeandlow.com/editorial/voices.html) are examples. An award for Native American children's literature is being discussed; members of the American Indian Library Association expect to announce the first awards in the next two years (http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/aila.html).

Hade (1997) notes, "The meanings we hold about race, class, and gender (many of which may be stereotypes) mediate how we interpret text" (p. 235). Therefore, one must attend closely to the "premise that cultural awareness and understanding are prerequisites for the development and use of multicultural literature" (Barrera, Liguori, & Salas, 1993, p. 205). Like the teachers mentioned earlier, critics and award committee members may be evaluating books through a lens provided by schooling that presented inaccurate and biased history and social studies content and did little to promote cultural awareness and understanding. They may also lack critical insight into their own racial identity development and its impact on their individual approaches to children's literature.

Using Theories of Race to Examine Children's Literature

Ideas about race theory may be useful in facilitating "reading against the grain" at a deep level, providing teachers with both the rationale and the insights to select books with strong positive images of people from groups that have been marginalized. Reading against the grain is described as "a way to examine the unexamined, question the unquestioned, and hold up to scrutiny the unspoken assertions the text is making about the way lives are lived in society" (Temple, Martinez, Yokota, & Naylor, 1998, p. 43). It entails interrogating the literature based on such questions as:

- Are characters "outside the mainstream culture" depicted as individuals or as caricatures?
- Does their representation include significant specific cultural information? Or does it follow stereotypes?
- Who has the power in this story? What is the nature of their power, and how do they use it?
- Who has wisdom? What is the nature of their wisdom, and how do they use it?
- What are the consequences of certain behaviors? What behaviors or traits are rewarded, and how? What behaviors are punished, and how?
- How is language used to create images of people of a particular group? How are artistic elements used to create those images?
- Who has written this story? Who has illustrated it? Are they inside or outside the groups they are presenting? What are they in a position to know? What do they claim to know?
- Whose voices are heard? Whose are missing?
- What do this narrative and these pictures say about race? Class? Culture? Gender? Age? Resistance to the status quo?

The roots of this type of reading against the grain go back several decades. In 1948, for example, the National Council of Teachers of English published *We Build Together,* which featured "Criteria for Judging Books about Negroes for Young People" (Rollins, 1948, p. 4), a list of questions much like those listed above. The Council on Interracial Books for Children created *Guidelines for Selecting Bias-free Textbooks and Storybooks* in 1980; it serves as a model for similar documents today.

The point of reading against the grain is not to find "perfect" multicultural books. No such thing exists, nor is it likely that there are any books that are free of ideology. The purpose is to help illuminate the places that bias, stereotypes, and misinformation might be hidden—hidden, perhaps, even from the authors and illustrators who produce the images.

The critical literature about multicultural books can help educators to read against the grain themselves and help them guide children in the process. In her textbook *Children and Books,* Zena Sutherland (1991) writes, "The professional teacher, librarian, reviewer, or editor should know both the books themselves and the critical literature, since criticism entails making judgments that ought to be informed and objective" (p. 25).

If teachers are to interrogate literature effectively, they need to be aware of critical reviews that touch on issues addressed in critical race theory. They can look to journals such as *Multicultural Review* (http://www.mcreview.com/mainpage.htm), *Multicultural Education,* and *The New Advocate* (http://www.christopher-gordon.com/newadvocate.htm). The September 2001 issue of *The Lion and the Unicorn* addresses critical race theory directly. They can also become familiar with more specialized publications such as *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (http://www.richmond.edu/faculty/ASAIL/sail-hp.html), *African American Review* (http://web.indstate.edu/artsci/AAR/), and *Asian Perspectives* (http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/journals/ap/). The Smithsonian Institution also maintains a bibliography of review of books featuring Native Americans (http://nmnhwww.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Indbibl/bibliogr.html).

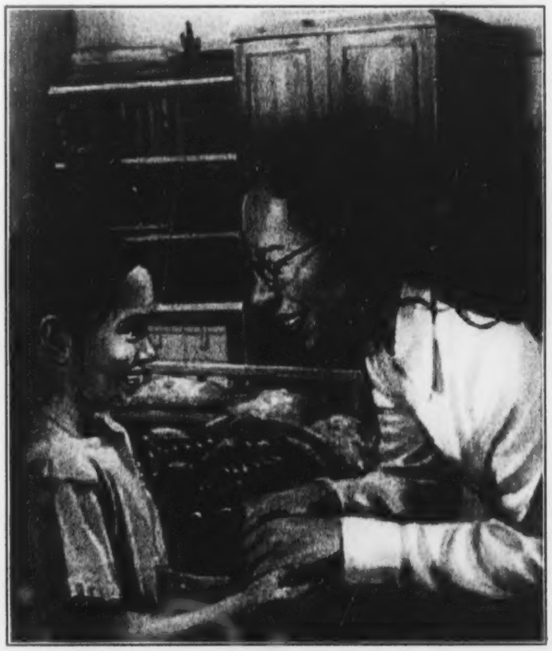

Illustration from *Jingle Dancer*
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Educators can also become familiar with smaller publishers such as Cinco Puntos (http://cincopuntos.com) and Children's Book Press (http://www.cbookpress.org/). Another small press with a multicultural focus is Lee and Low, which is owned by Asian Americans (http:// www.leeandlow.com). Organizations such as Oyate, which focuses on Native American literature (http://www.oyate.org), are potential sources of books with insider perspectives. Teachers need to know they need not settle for images that mislead and miseducate. For example, they may replace the problematic uses and portrayals of Native American life in *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky; Knots on a Counting Rope;* and *Arrow to the Sun* (see Appendix II) with books like *A River Lost* by Lynn Bragg (Metis), *The Good Luck Cat* by Joy Harjo (Muscogee Creek), and *Jingle Dancer* by Cynthia Smith (Muscogee Creek) (see Appendix III). Such books provide substantial views of contemporary Native Americans as people who live in modern houses, hold down jobs, have pets, take on environmental issues, and honor their own cultures in specific ways. The books by Bragg, Harjo, and Smith also give children access to authentic Native American voices. *The Good Luck Cat* and *Jingle Dancer* received awards from Wordcraft Circle, a Native American writers' organization, in 2001.

Knowing how to help children read against the grain in the literature they encounter is an important skill for teachers, one which is already part of some courses in teacher education programs. It is sometimes argued that books in which bias is openly and uncritically expressed can be used to good effect if teachers point out the flaws and discuss how and why such negative and inaccurate representations came to be. Such adult guidance is seen as facilitating children's greater awareness of stereotyping in literature and impressing on them the need for more accurate representation (Smithsonian Institution, 1996). Conversely, it is argued that few adults can themselves recognize the problems, let alone guide children effectively toward understanding the stereotypes and lack of historical context contained in the books (Thompson, 2001, p. 369).

A robust tradition exists in early childhood education of taking into account children's prior experience and building upon what they already know in order to facilitate learning

(Dewey, 1938; Katz & Chard, 1991). While frank discussions of prejudice, racism, and other oppressions are essential to enabling children to recognize and oppose them (Derman-Sparks et al., 1989), developmental factors may intervene that render such discussions problematic (Katz, 1999) even when teachers and parents do fully recognize the bias in books and in society as a whole. It may therefore be in the best interest of all children to have solid grounding in accurate, culturally sensitive images before attempting to deal with problematic books. The positive images are seen as constituting a body of prior knowledge, a basis from which to question and critique bias. Within this knowledge base (to return to Sims Bishop's metaphor), children from groups outside the mainstream are affirmed by undistorted mirrors, and other children's awareness benefits from the view through clear windows.

Seeing Teacher Education through Theories about Race

Assumptions about others and self can be deeply ingrained, according to critical race theory and racial identity development theory. Multicultural children's literature "is only as culturally enlightened as the people who create it and use it" (Barrera, Liguori, & Salas, 1993, p. 235). Teachers need to see and identify the problems within books like *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky,* or to note the differences between *A Gift from Papa Diego* and *A Day's Work.* Future teachers are therefore seen as needing the guidance of early childhood teacher education programs that offer significant opportunities to read, hear, and discuss the critical perspectives on ideology, representation, and identity as they relate to literature, particularly multicultural literature. Teacher educators who have interrogated their own attitudes and beliefs are seen as being in a position to use this and related understanding to help preservice teachers prepare to critique race, power, and privilege in their lives and in the wider society, so they can become more effective teachers (Sleeter, 1998).

Such changes go far beyond a single course; they would involve reconceptualizing the foundations on which early childhood professional preparation rests—incorporating the child-developmental paradigm that has dominated into an expanded view of the field, that intentionally and directly addresses teachers' and children's developing understanding of self and multiculturalism. Contemporary professional preparation programs in social work and counseling psychology often require a "didactic therapy" or self-awareness component as well as practicum experience and extensive coursework on theory and practice. The didactic therapy component, considered a key to becoming an effective practitioner, is likely to include both individual and group work. Those who advocate such deep change in teacher education do not suggest a requirement of personal therapy for early childhood teacher preparation, but rather coursework and practicum designed to promote critical awareness of one's own background as well as attitudes and beliefs about others (Sheets, 2000, p. 16).

Comments

We do not imply that such transformation within teacher education is without opponents, or that critical race theorists and other scholars feel the change would be simple.

A broadened dialogue is what we seek. Given the potential of good multicultural children's literature for fostering awareness of and empathy toward other perspectives, we invite early childhood professionals to begin bringing critical race theory and related ideas into the discourse about that literature and its role in the lives of young children. Such discourse can be extended into dialogue about teacher preparation and the foundations on which early childhood professional preparation rests.

As teacher educators, we recommend sharing with preservice teachers a message regarding their responsibility to "tell the truth" about human beings. We have reminded our students that they would not knowingly share literature with children that gave them false information about science or math, because it would damage children's understanding of the world. They are also called upon not to condone false or misleading information about groups of people in the literature they share. In fact, just as with science and math, they have an obligation to actively present the alternative: accurate, authentic images of all the people of the world. This practice is in the best interests of all their students—those who grow up "in the mainstream" of U.S. society and those from groups that have been marginalized.

Individual teachers and teacher educators need not wait for institution-wide support. They can begin now to read against the grain, and to make use of resources that can help to facilitate understanding of race and privilege in society. It cannot be assumed that only European Americans need to develop this awareness. Cross-cultural understanding is essential; individuals in any segment of society can be ill-informed, or well-informed, about any other group. New awareness can have an impact on the literature educators choose and the ways they share it with young children.

Embracing this awareness, they can approach children's literature in early childhood settings with determined optimism: "I don't recognize all the pitfalls yet, but I am awake to the possibilities of using this literature in early childhood settings. I don't always know what to look and listen for now, but I will find out. Now I know where to look, and I know how to look closely. Then I will make choices based on what I see and hear, for the good of all the children whose lives I touch."

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Appendix I

Memo on Chief Seattle's "Ecology Speech"

To: Requestors of Chief Seattle's "Ecology" Speech

From: Washington/Northwest Collections, Washington State Library

The speech given by Chief Seattle in January of 1854 is the subject of a great deal of historical debate. The most important fact to note is that there is NO VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT IN EXISTENCE. All known texts are second-hand.

Version 1 appeared in the Seattle Sunday Star on Oct. 29, 1887, in a column by Dr. Henry A. Smith. He makes it very

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clear that his version is not an exact copy, but rather the best he could put together from notes taken at the time. There is an undecided historical argument on which native dialect the Chief would have used, Duwamish or Suquamish. Either way all agree the speech was translated into the Chinook Jargon on the he spot, since Chief Seattle never learned to speak English.

Version 2 was written by poet William Arrowsmith in the late 1960s. This was an attempt to put the text into more current speech patterns, rather than Dr. Smith's more flowery Victorian style. Except for this modernization, it is very similar to Version 1.

Version 3 is perhaps the most widely known of all. This version was written by Texas professor Ted Perry as part of a film script. The makers of the film took a little literary license, further changing the speech and making it into a letter to President Franklin Pierce, which has been frequently reprinted. No such letter was ever written by or for Chief Seattle.

Version 4 appeared in an exhibit at Expo '74 in Spokane, Washington, and is a shortened edition of Dr. Perry's script (Version 3).

Whatever version you read, the expressions in the speech are certainly uplifting. However, it's clear from this colored past that there is still some doubt as to the authenticity of Chief Seattle's original words. Anyone using the speech should keep this in mind.

The best description of the saga of Chief Seattle's speech can be found in an essay by Rudolf Kaiser: "Chief Seattle's Speech(es): American Origins and European Reception," published in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature* by the University of California Press, 1987. Another excellent discussion appears in David Buerge's article "Seattle's King Arthur: How Chief Seattle Ccontinues to Inspire His Many Admirers to Put Words in His Mouth," appearing in the July 17, 1991, *Seattle Weekly.*

Appendix II

Problematic Children's Books

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A Day's Work by Eve Bunting. Illustrated by Ronald Himler. Clarion Books, 1994.
Arrow to the Sun by Gerald McDermott. Viking Press, 1974.
Brother Eagle, Sister Sky by Susan Jeffers. Dial, 1991.
Knots on a Counting Rope by Bill Martin, Jr. & John Archambault. Illustrated by Ted Rand. Henry Holt, 1987.

Appendix III

Recommended Children's Books

A Gift from Papa Diego by Benjamin Alire Saenz. Illustrated by Geronimo Garcia. Cinco Puntos Press, 1998.
The Good Luck Cat by Joy Harjo. Illustrated by Paul Lee. Harcourt Brace, 2000.
Jingle Dancer by Cynthia Smith. Illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu. Morrow Junior Books, 2000.
A River Lost by Lynn Bragg. Illustrated by Virgil Marchand. Hancock House Publishers, 1996.

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Starting School: Effective Transitions

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Abstract

This paper focuses on effective transition-to-school programs. Using a framework of 10 guidelines developed through the Starting School Research Project, it provides examples of effective strategies and transition programs. In this context, the nature of some current transition programs is questioned, and the curriculum of transition is problematized. In particular, issues are raised around who has input into such programs and who decides on appropriate curriculum.

Introduction

The Significance of Starting School

Starting school is an important time for young children, their families, and educators. It has been described as "one of the major challenges children have to face in their early childhood years" (Victorian Department of School Education, 1992, p. 44), "a big step for all children and their families" (New South Wales Department of School Education, 1997, p. 8), and "a key life cycle transition both in and outside school" (Pianta & Cox, 1999, p. xvii). Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (1999, p. 47) suggest that the transition to school "sets the tone and direction of a child's school career," while Christensen (1998) notes that transition to school has been described in the literature as a rite of passage associated with increased status and as a turning point in a child's life.

Whether or not these descriptions are accurate, they highlight the potential significance of a child's transition to school. In Kagan's (1999) words, starting school is a "big deal." It is clearly a key experience not only for the children starting school but also for educators—both in schools and in prior-to-school settings—and for their families. Bailey (1999, p. xv) summarizes the importance of this experience in the following way:

> Kindergarten is a context in which children make important conclusions about school as a

> place where they want to be and about themselves as learners vis-a-vis schools. If no other objectives are accomplished, it is essential that the transition to school occur in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners.

An Ecological View of Transition

In an ecological model, "a child's transition to school is understood in terms of the influence of contexts (for example, family, classroom, community) and the connections among these contexts (e.g., family-school relationships) at any given time and across time" (Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999, p. 4). From this, "the transition to kindergarten is fundamentally a matter of establishing a relationship between the home and the school in which the child's development is the key focus or goal" (Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999, p. 4). This model draws on the work of Bronfenbrenner (see, for example, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and others in describing ways in which children influence the contexts in which they live and the ways in which those contexts also affect experiences.

The ecological model reflects the findings of our own research and provides a structure for investigating relevant issues, such as an individual child's perceived readiness for school, the impact of community resources on transition programs, the role of screening procedures for children about to start school, and the importance of bilingual programs. Considering the context of the transition to school enables us to reflect upon the changes within that context over time and the implications of these changes. For example, as home and school contexts come together, the relationship between early childhood educators and parents is highlighted. Some forms of relationships seem particularly conducive to children experiencing success at school, and others do not (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Just as changes in relationships between early childhood educators and parents can have an impact on children, changes in children can have an impact on relationships. A model that recognizes this fact provides a powerful tool for analyzing the complexity of the situation.

The Starting School Research Project

In New South Wales (NSW), Australia, the school year commences in late January and finishes in early December. The age by which children are legally required to start school is 6 years. However, children are eligible to start school at the beginning of the school year if they turn 5 by July 31 in that same year. A child whose birthday falls after this cut-off date starts school the following year. Because there is only one annual intake of students, children starting school can vary in age from 4-1/2 to 6 years. The first year of school, kindergarten, involves a full-day program operating throughout school terms. In some schools, kindergarten students finish school 30 minutes prior to other students, at least for the first term.

The Starting School Research Project, based at the University of Western Sydney, involves a group of researchers and a wide ranging Advisory Committee representing major early childhood organizations, early childhood employer groups, parent associations, school organizations, community, and union perspectives (Dockett, Howard, & Perry, 1999). Over the past three years, the project has investigated the perceptions and expectations of all those involved in young children's transition to school.

The initial phase of the project consisted of interviews with groups of children, parents, and early childhood educators—in both school and prior-to-school settings—to determine what is important to each of these groups as children start school. From these interviews and a detailed review of the relevant literature, an extensive questionnaire was developed. Over the period 1998-2000, this questionnaire was distributed to parents and early childhood educators across NSW (Perry, Dockett, & Howard, 2000; Perry, Dockett, & Tracey, 1998).

Together, the interviews and questionnaire responses have enabled the project team to describe the most important issues for children, parents, and educators as children start school. A series of categories of responses was devised using grounded theory that reflected the issues raised by respondents. These categories related to (1) the *knowledge* children needed to have in order to start school, (2) elements of *social adjustment* required in the transition to school, (3) specific *skills* children needed to have mastered, (4) *dispositions* conducive to a successful start to school, (5) the *rules* of school, (6) *physical* aspects of starting school, (7) *family issues,* and (8) the nature of the *educational environment* within school (Dockett & Perry, 1999b). A confirmatory factor analysis and review of national and international literature supported these categories. As an overview of the responses for different groups, the ranking of each category, from most to least mentioned, is listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Overview of Categories and Response Groups

Children	Parents	Early Childhood Educators
Rules	Social Adjustment	Social Adjustment
Disposition	Educational Environment	Disposition
Social Adjustment	Disposition	Skills
Knowledge	Physical	Educational Environment
Physical	Family	Physical
Skills	Skills	Knowledge
	Rules	Family
	Knowledge	Rules

The focus of this paper is the way in which these responses have been used to develop a series of guidelines that promote effective transition to school, rather than on the results themselves. However, it is of relevance to give a brief overview of the results and the ways in which these have informed the development of the guidelines.

One key result is that what the adults—parents and educators involved in the transition to school—considered important varied considerably from what the children considered important. For example, we have reported (Dockett & Perry, 1999b) that young children focus mainly on the rules they need to know in order to function at school, as well as how they feel about going to school (dispositions). Important in the latter category is the presence of friends and the expectation that school is a place to be with friends and to make friends.

Parents and early childhood educators, on the other hand, have emphasized the importance of children adjusting socially to the school environment. While parents and early childhood educators generally agreed that social adjustment was the most important factor in a child's transition to school, they emphasized different aspects of social adjustment. For early childhood educators, social adjustment involved children being able to operate as part of a large group, through sharing the teacher's attention, demonstrating independence as required, and being able to follow directions. Parents emphasized the importance of their children adjusting to other adults in an unfamiliar setting, through aspects such as being able to separate easily from the parent and join the teacher in class, and being able to interact and respond appropriately with nonfamilial adults. Parents were also concerned about the two-way nature of that interaction. A common question asked by parents was "Will the teacher like my child?" On one hand, parents were keen for their child to adjust to school and to "fit in" to the classroom. On the other hand, they were anxious that someone would appreciate the "specialness" of their child, and that someone would come to know and appreciate their child in a positive and responsive way (Dockett & Perry, 1999a).

Few respondents indicated that children's knowledge was a major issue in starting school. The group that mentioned knowledge most often was the children, with some commenting quite strongly that they could not start school until they could write their name or count to 10. Early childhood educators generally expressed the attitude that "we can teach them to write their name, but it's more important to have kids who can function in the classroom." Parents, too, were not overly concerned about the knowledge that children took with them to school. Of greater concern to them was whether or not they had chosen the optimal educational environment for their child.

Project Themes

The perspectives and experiences of children, parents, and early childhood educators have helped to shape some strong themes that underpin continuing aspects of the project. The first is a belief and commitment that starting school is not just an experience for the individual child. Rather, it is a community experience, involving a wide range of people. In addition to the child, the family and the community in which the family lives are involved. Educators in prior-to-school settings have an important role to play, and all school staff—not just the kindergarten teacher—are crucial to the effectiveness of the transition experience. In other words, starting school is a community issue and a community responsibility. When communities work together and when children realize that they have the support of groups within their respective communities, starting school can be a positive and exciting experience.

The second theme is that effective transition programs focus on relationships. While it can be important for children to possess and demonstrate some specific skills and knowledge, their ability to form meaningful relationships is crucial to their successful transition and influential in their later school careers (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999). The nature of relationships between and among children, families, peers, and early childhood educators has a significant impact on children's sense of belonging and acceptance within a school community. In situations where positive relationships had been established between families and schools, children, and teachers (and between educators in prior-to-school settings and schools), children, parents, and early childhood educators reported positive feelings about the transition to school. Where such relationships were not in evidence, hesitations, anxieties, and concerns prevailed.

It is generally the case that children who experience similar environments and expectations at home and school are likely to find the transition to school, as well as school in general, easier (Nelson, 1995). The converse also holds: that is, children who find school unfamiliar and unrelated to their home contexts tend to experience difficulty, confusion, and anxiety during the transition—particularly when the cultures in the home and school differ (Toomey, 1989). Effective transition programs that respect the different perspectives and expectations that converge when children start school and aim to develop an effective partnership between all involved can provide a vital connection.

Both of these themes reflect a broad view of transition experiences. In this view, there is recognition that there are many contributors to transition experiences and that the perspectives and expectations of each of these contributors shape those experiences in some way. For example, we know that children starting school bring with them a wide array of experiences and understandings. As a result, they experience the transition to school in different ways (Rimm-Kaufman, Cox, & Pianta, 1998). Similarly, early childhood educators and parents have varying expectations about the transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 1999a). Other factors, such as the amount and nature of family support for children starting school, teacher expectations about children, families and parent involvement (Entwisle, 1995), as well as children's expectations of school (Brostrom, 1995; Christensen, 1998) all have a significant impact on transition experiences and the ways in which these are provided and interpreted.

Guidelines for Effective Transition to School Programs

It is with this background that the *Guidelines for Effective Transition to School Programs* have been developed. The guidelines have been through several iterations, both at research forums and in extensive discussions with the Starting School Advisory Committee (Dockett, Perry, & Howard, 2000). Recognizing that effective transition programs are contextually relevant, the guidelines are not prescriptive. There is no sense that all schools or communities should have the same transition program. Rather, the expectation is that there are many ways to implement the different guidelines, and these different strategies should be encouraged as groups of people develop programs that are relevant, meaningful, and appropriate within their own community. The aim of the guidelines is to provide a framework for developing and evaluating transition programs. The guidelines (Dockett, Perry, & Howard, 2000) argue that effective transition-to-school programs:

- establish positive relationships between the children, parents, and educators;
- facilitate each child's development as a capable learner;
- differentiate between "orientation-to-school" and "transition-to-school" programs;
- draw upon dedicated funding and resources;
- involve a range of stakeholders;

- are well planned and effectively evaluated;
- are flexible and responsive;
- are based on mutual trust and respect;
- rely on reciprocal communication among participants;
- take into account contextual aspects of community and of individual families and children within that community.

Using the Guidelines

During 2000-2001, members of the Starting School research team have been working with groups of parents and educators, and sometimes children, in 15 different locations across NSW. The aim of these groups is to bring together members of the community who are interested, and who have a role to play, in children's transition to school, to reflect on current practice in transition, and to use the guidelines to develop, implement, and evaluate contextually relevant transition-to-school programs. Within these locations, there is coverage of inner-urban, suburban, rural, and isolated communities; low, middle, and high socioeconomic status; non-English-speaking communities; Aboriginal communities; and services relating to the special needs of young children and their families. The range of school and prior-to-school services in each location varies considerably. However, the sample covers the full range of school services—government, Catholic, independent, distance education, disadvantaged schools—and prior-to-school services—long day care, family day care, preschool, mobile services, and distance education.

In the next section of this paper, we provide the theoretical basis for the guidelines, connections with the categories described earlier in the paper, and some examples of the ways in which the guidelines have been implemented by the working groups in different locations. The examples are by no means exhaustive. Rather they are used to illustrate some of the potential applications of the guidelines.

1. Effective transition programs establish positive relationships between the children, parents, and educators.

Effective programs are based on the establishment and maintenance of relationships between all parties: educators, parents, and children. While transition programs may focus on developing children's knowledge, understanding, and skills, they have, as their key function, a commitment to facilitating positive social interactions and relationships. Effective transition programs encourage all participants to regard themselves, and their co-participants, as valued members of the school community.

Interviews with children have indicated that they place great importance on friends, and having friends, at school. Starting school was regarded as a chance to make "different friends" by "talking and playing nice to them." Children described liking school because they could "make up lots and lots of friends" and, conversely, described school as a sad place to be "when nobody would be a friend."

Some schools have introduced "buddy" programs, where children in the upper years of primary school are paired with children starting school. Buddies typically spend a lot of time together in the first few weeks of school, in the playground, and sometimes in integrated classroom experiences. In one school, year 5 buddies joined the kindergarten children for class play sessions, as well as during lunch and recess times. Teachers also have responded to children's focus on friends by planning time within their programs for small group and other experiences that provide opportunities for children to get to know each other and to make friends.

Relationships between and among all participants in the transition to school are important. Some schools provide opportunities for parents to meet when they take their children to school for the first time, some prior-to-school services arrange informal meetings among families whose children will be attending the same school, and some educators in prior-to-school and school settings meet on a regular basis to consider ways to promote continuity between settings.

Many parents appreciated opportunities to meet other parents, as well as teachers. However, not all parents reported positive experiences. Some described a sense of alienation as their child started school—particularly some parents who had been actively involved in the management of prior-to-school services and who then felt "shut-out" by the school administrative processes. One parent was dismayed that she "had been the treasurer of the preschool committee, used to dropping in as she needed, but now had to make an appointment to see her child's teacher."

Just as important are the relationships that exist among teachers in schools. School principals who value the work of their kindergarten teachers and support them in many ways have an important role to play in establishing the first year of school as an important one within the school community.

2. Effective transition programs facilitate each child's development as a capable learner.

Effective transition programs recognize the growth, development, and learning that has occurred before the child starts school as well as the impact of the child's environment on these. Effective transition programs recognize the role of the family and other educators and seek to collaborate in ways that build upon the child's experiences. Children are recognized as capable learners who bring with them a vast array of learning experiences and expectations, which may, or may not, reflect the knowledge, skills, and understandings reflected in the school environment.

While knowledge and skills did not rate in the survey or interviews as highly important when children start school, children clearly have constructed a great deal of knowledge and understanding, and acquired a great many skills, before they start school. The low rating of knowledge and skills does not necessarily imply that they do not matter. Rather, comments indicate that these can be taught at school in an effective manner, if other aspects of the starting school experience have been positive.

Many teachers in schools are keen to find out what children know and can do, and to use this information to guide curriculum within the first year of school. With parental permission, educators from prior-to-school settings and schools can meet to discuss any potential issues related to transition. The knowledge gained can be invaluable when children start school. In several areas, teachers in schools try to get to know the children and their families before they start school. Teachers can meet with children and their families through informal gatherings, such as welcome barbeques, or through visits to prior-to-school services. In one location, the kindergarten teacher spends some of her teaching release time each week visiting a local preschool and reading to the children. When the preschool children then start school, they see a familiar face. The teacher also has some background knowledge of the children, the issues they have addressed in preschool, and, in this case, their literacy interests.

3. Effective transition programs differentiate between "orientation-to-school" and "transition-to-school" programs.

Orientation programs are designed to help children and parents become familiar with the school setting. They may involve a tour of the school, meeting relevant people in the school, and spending some time in a classroom. Orientation programs are characterized by presentations by the school to the parents and children.

Transition programs may include an orientation time but tend to be longer term and more geared to the individual needs of children and families than orientation programs. Transition programs can be of indeterminate length, depending on a particular child or parent's needs. They recognize that starting school is a time of transition for all involved: children, families, and educators. Transition programs may be planned and implemented by a team of people representing all those involved in the change.

Opportunities to visit the school and to spend time with others at the school are important to children. Some children indicated that they started school on the day of their orientation, even if they had spent only a few hours at the school. Parents placed emphasis on getting to know the school and the school's expectations as they aimed to help prepare their children for school. Teachers too emphasized the value of programs that helped them to get to know children and parents they would be working with the following year. Most expressed a preference for ongoing transition, rather than orientation, programs.

Orientation and transition programs vary widely. Those reported by parents to be most effective for them and their children involve much more than a walk around the school and a talk from the principal about what is expected at the school. Of value to parents was the chance to ask questions, discuss issues, and generally find out how school had changed since their own schooldays. The most effective strategy was to have several sessions, involving small groups of parents and children. As well, parents who had a chance to observe their child in a school setting felt that they were better equipped to make decisions about whether or not the child was "ready" to start school. Teachers also reported a similar view. Parent groups at schools are often involved in these programs. In one instance, parents designed and implemented a survey of other parents, seeking reactions to transition programs. Their results will feed back into the planning of future transition programs.

Programs vary according to the context—for example, some schools invite parents to sessions in the evenings, as a way of catering for working parents, and others provide child care for younger children during the day, so that parents can attend the program with the child who is about to start school.

Several schools have promoted parent involvement in transition programs. However, there are few examples of children having any input into transition programs. Some innovative possibilities to explore include inviting children who are about to start school and those already at school to discuss issues they expect to face, or faced, when starting school and to seek their help in designing a program based on what they think new children to the school should know.

4. Effective transition programs draw upon dedicated funding and resources.

A range of resources is required for transition programs to function effectively. These include people, time, materials, and space in which to operate the program. Often, creative and collaborative approaches are used by staff in schools and prior-to-school settings to identify ways in which resources or funding can be used to support transition programs. Appropriate funding and resources may come from a number of sources.

Early childhood educators, in particular, have raised the issue of resourcing programs, reporting large amounts of organization occurring out of school hours and a sense of working alone to promote transition programs. Parents have reported both positive and negative reactions to programs and the associated resources. One parent reported feeling overwhelmed at her son's orientation, where the new group of 25 children and their parents had joined the existing class of 25 children in a rather small classroom: "The crush, the noise, was overwhelming for me, let alone J. And all because the school didn't have another room we could use." Other parents have appreciated a chance to move around schoolrooms and playgrounds as a way of seeing what the school offers. In one program, children "felt special" when they were issued a T-shirt as part of their transition package.

The injection of money into programs is a rare, yet welcomed, occurrence. It signifies to the community the worth and value of transition programs. Financial and other resources are essential to release staff from teaching responsibilities in order for them to visit schools and prior-to-school settings and to provide support for transition programs. The effective management of resources is often the key to an effective transition program. In one location, an impressive coordination of resources has meant that children who are about to start preschool visit the center on the same day that children from the preschool visit the school they will be attending the following year. In each location, the "new" children have a chance to experience the environment without being overwhelmed by the children who are already in attendance. Further, the educators in both settings are able to concentrate on the needs of the "new" children.

5. Effective transition programs involve a range of stakeholders.

Educators, parents, and children should have input into the program. Educators from prior-to-school settings as well as teachers of kindergarten and other grades and school staff, such as community languages teachers, librarians, staff of the out-of-school-hours program, support/clerical staff, and general staff, can all make valuable contributions to a transition program. Parents know their children well and can provide a great deal of valuable input to a transition program. Young children too can make a significant contribution as they indicate areas of interest or concern. Educators in prior-to-school settings also know the children well. They may have developed comprehensive records as part of their planning process and often have become trusted friends of the parents and the child in the years before school. Further, in some contexts, members of the broader community may be involved with the program.

Some of the most positive descriptions of starting school experiences came from those involved in collaborative programs. Parents described being pleasantly surprised that prior-to-school educators and school teachers would work together on programs and reported their children's sense of amazement when the two sets of early childhood educators were seen working together.

Effective transition programs do not rely on one individual. Rather, they involve, at the least, parents, children, and educators. Ideally, there are connections between prior-to-school and school settings as well. Involving a range of people does not mean that they all do the same thing. In some situations, parents with particular skills and abilities use these to great effect in transition programs—for example, writing newsletters to other parents, facilitating discussions, or spending time with individual children. In one rural location, the involvement of the bus driver has had a major impact on the transition program, with parents, children, and teachers now feeling much more comfortable about the time children spend on the bus traveling to and from school. Many children will spend several hours on the bus each day, and a comfortable relationship with the bus driver makes this experience more pleasant. Similarly, staff who work in out-of-school-hours care indicate that involvement with transition programs helps them get to know children and families and also to work with others in a consistent way.

Different communities will have different stakeholders who could be involved in the transition to school. In some indigenous communities, it is vital that the programs have the involvement of elders or other respected members of the community.

6. Effective transition programs are well planned and effectively evaluated.

Effective transition programs are based on detailed planning and have clearly defined objectives that have been developed in collaboration with all of the stakeholders. The effectiveness of the program is assessed in relation to these objectives. It is important that stakeholders have opportunities to be involved at all levels of planning, implementation, and evaluation and that their perspectives be accepted.

Children, parents, and early childhood educators have different views about effective transition-to-school programs. Attaining a sense of working together involves spending some time establishing what is important within a particular community or context and then working towards that goal. Parents of children with special learning needs report that long-term planning, focusing on the establishment of realistic and appropriate aims, is a valuable part of any transition program. Parents and early childhood educators also indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to evaluate programs. Children also provided some useful feedback about the programs they attended. This feedback ranged from the observation that "teachers yell" to the comment that "I think school is better than preschool because there's so many people and space for all of them."

Planning and evaluation can take many forms. In some settings, a short but intensive period is used to plan the program; in other settings, planning occurs over several terms. Collaborative relationships often take time to develop, but once in place, these relationships can provide the basis of an effective planning group over the longer term. Evaluating programs is essential, both in establishing the credibility of the programs and in demonstrating the value of programs to the wider community. It is important to agree on the types of data to be reported and to use these data appropriately. Examples of data that could be used to inform decisions about the program include (1) children's comments and drawings; (2) parent surveys and comments; (3) indications of children's well-being at school, such as attendance patterns, interactions, and familiarity and comfort in the environment; (4) teachers' reactions; and (5) observations. Data can be documented in many ways, including photographs of children/parents/teachers at school, children's drawings or constructions, recordings of children's narratives, and letters from parents. As important as the information that is recorded is the way it is interpreted and used. In any planning and evaluation, it is important to consider the perspectives of all those involved, rather than to interpret the information through one lens only.

7. Effective transition programs are flexible and responsive.

Well-planned programs can be responsive to the changing needs and interests of participants. As each of the participants gets to know the others better, needs will change and areas of interest and concern will emerge. Effective programs recognize that flexible means are required to involve different groups of people.

One of the concerns raised consistently by parents related to their role at school. Many were familiar with what was expected at preschool or day care but were unsure of what their role could be in the school setting. Some were concerned that they could not get to school during the day, and their absence would be taken as a sign of disinterest. Others were worried that they may not be able to help children with homework. Schools attempted to alleviate these concerns when they organized meetings in ways that were flexible and responsive, both in their timing and in the issues covered throughout the program.

Many people within communities are keen for their children to succeed at school, but they find it difficult themselves to access the school. This difficulty may arise because of their own negative memories of school, because they work hours that prevent them getting to the school during the day, because they live some distance from the school and either do not have transport or the time to travel to the school on a regular basis, or for many other reasons. It cannot be assumed that these people have no interest in the school or no interest in supporting their children as they start school. Effective transition programs respect these differences and respond to them in a flexible manner.

One example of such flexibility and responsiveness can be drawn from one relatively isolated community. For families in outlying areas of this community, access to preschool involves a mobile preschool setting up in the local area, at most one day every two weeks. Parents often asked staff from the mobile preschool about their child's readiness for school. Each of these families had limited means of comparing their child with others and were seeking some reassurance that the children would be successful at school. In response to this concern, some parents, preschool staff, and other early childhood educators—including school teachers—prepared a brochure outlining some of the things parents could do with their children to help prepare them for school. They were keen to avoid a checklist of skills and focused more on the types of interactions and experiences that would help children feel comfortable at school.

8. Effective transition programs are based on mutual trust and respect.

Where programs evolve and operate in a climate of trust, and where the perspectives of all participants are respected, open communication is likely to develop. A climate of trust and respect enables all involved to feel valued within the school community. Just as children function best in situations where they feel safe—psychologically as well as physically—adults who feel their ideas and views will be listened to are likely to contribute to the program in significant ways.

In interviews, children described a gamut of feelings as they started school. They also expressed great trust in teachers who took the time to listen to their concerns. For example, Joanne described feeling "a bit embarrassed" at starting school because there were "too many people standing around looking" at her. She felt much better in the classroom when she could talk with the teacher and the teacher could respond to her.

Trust and respect are conveyed in many ways. Being prepared to listen to alternative points of view is an important start to this process. Educators, families, and children all need to feel trusted and respected. In several transition programs, a great deal of effort has gone into promoting a climate of trust and respect among prior-to-school educators and teachers in schools. Despite early childhood educators being employed in both settings, often with the same training, there is a definite gulf between the two sectors. In NSW, this situation is exemplified by educators in most prior-to-school settings being responsible to one government department and teachers in the early years of school being employed by another.

Where transition programs involve educators from both settings, and where there is clear respect for what the other does, meaningful professional relationships can exist. In some instances, such respect has been built up through ongoing contact. This contact has involved visiting the different settings, sharing information as appropriate, involving staff from both settings in professional development programs, and the like. One concrete example of where such trust is beneficial is in the transfer of information about individual children from one setting to another. With parental permission, teachers in schools can learn a lot about a child by accessing relevant information held by staff in prior-to-school settings. However, for this strategy to be meaningful, teachers in schools and educators in prior-to-school settings must have a relationship of trust and respect built upon an acceptance of the professionalism of both groups.

9. Effective transition programs rely on reciprocal communication among participants.

Open and reciprocal communication among children, parents, and early childhood educators is an important element of effective programs. Reciprocal communication recognizes that parents, as well as educators, know a great deal about the children in their care. Children too know a lot about themselves, how they learn, and how they respond in certain situations. Collaboration based on open communication establishes a context where the educational needs of the child are uppermost in the minds of all involved. Communication between staff of schools and prior-to-school settings is also valuable but must be guided by legal as well as ethical considerations as to what information about children and families may be shared.

Often, children are eager to be involved in meaningful communication about school. Adults need to be prepared to engage in reciprocal communication with children, and to expect that this experience can be worthwhile for themselves as well as the children. In one instance, Brett shared his concerns about starting school, where he expected that "a boy might push me over on the cement. When you are at school, they might push you over because you are little and they hurt you." Recognizing that these concerns are real and responding appropriately provide the basis for reciprocal communication.

Avenues for two-way communication in many communities will be enhanced through the involvement of bilingual educators, parents, and, sometimes, children. The languages and cultures of the community in which the school is located need to be reflected in the group responsible for the transition program.

Sometimes it is easy to recall examples of miscommunication rather than effective communication among those involved in starting school. However, even a focus on these negatives can highlight the value of reciprocal communication. This form of communication is integral to several of the other guidelines. For example, it is most likely to occur in a context of mutual trust and respect, and where positive relationships exist.

Effective transition programs rely on two-way communication—that is, more than the school sending home letters about what should happen and more than families only interacting with staff at the school when a problem is perceived. While newsletters and notice-boards can be useful, they promote one-way, rather than reciprocal, communication. In one effective transition program, reciprocal communication was promoted by the involvement of a bilingual community worker. This person had credibility in the local community and was able to facilitate discussions between teachers and parents about relevant issues.

10. Effective transition programs take into account contextual aspects of community and of individual families and children within that community.

A contextual framework focuses attention on the ways in which children are influenced by, and in turn influence, the context in which they exist. In this framework, the responsibility to become "ready" for school rests not with the individual child but with a community.

The contexts in which children live are influenced by issues such as socioeconomic status, geographical isolation, cultural diversity, parental work patterns, language backgrounds, disability, and other special needs. While it is important that this diversity is reflected at a general level in the transition program, it is imperative that differences among individuals and individual families within each community are recognized and valued for the richness they bring.

Given the diversity of contexts and relevant issues and interactions within these, we should see a diversity of transition programs in the project's research sites. While several of the issues identified by each of the working groups are similar, the ways in which they choose to respond to these differ considerably. For example, 8 of the 15 groups have identified communication between educators in prior-to-school and school settings as an area they would like to strengthen. The ways in which they have chosen to pursue this same issue include (1) arranging meetings at different venues so that educators can become familiar with the different settings, (2) having informal discussions after school hours, (3) spending teaching release time in different settings, and (4) writing to educators individually to share information. We regard the facility to design a program that reflects the context in which it occurs as essential to the success of transition programs.

Problematizing Transition

The current focus of the Starting School Research Project is working with different community groups to evaluate and strengthen transition-to-school programs across the state. It is rewarding to be involved with groups of people who have a strong commitment to the well-being of young children and their families as they start school. It is also challenging to encourage people to move beyond the expectations and some of the taken-for-granted practices—that is, to problematize transition. Through the process of questioning what we know and how we know it, we can come to reconceptualize practices that seem to be taken for granted (MacNaughton, 2000).

Two theoretical issues have emerged from the working groups: the trend to consider transition programs in terms of skills and abilities, and the curriculum of transition. The first of these is the focus on readiness for school as a series of isolated skills and abilities. It is quite easy to buy books detailing lists of skills that children should be able to demonstrate in order to be "ready for school" and to form the impression that children who cannot do any or all of these should not be sent to school. This focus is reiterated in the requests to the project team from parent groups, schools, and prior-to-school settings to talk with groups about getting children ready for school and to talk about how children's readiness for school can be addressed. It should be noted that in NSW, there is no schedule to assess children's school readiness and no requirement that any such assessment be completed. The only children for whom assessment is advised are children who are entering school on the basis of giftedness or special learning needs. One consequence has been that some schools and prior-to-school services develop their own checklists that tend to list easily measurable skills in isolation.

There is no doubt that some skills and abilities make the transition to school easier for all concerned, and we are in no sense saying that these should not be learned or demonstrated at some time. However, our research indicates that children, parents, and early childhood educators are more concerned about social issues, such as adjustment and relationships, and ways in which these can be promoted. As well as the anecdotal evidence about the benefits of "feeling like you belong" in a particular context, having a sense that "you are valued" and "your views are respected," there is growing research evidence that successful transitions to school are based substantially on social skills (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000) and facilitated by a series of responsive relationships.

The second issue relates to the curriculum of transition. Traditionally, there has been a sense that it is the responsibility of the school to induct children into the ways of the school. Our ongoing work with groups leads us to challenge this assumption and place the responsibility for transition programs in the broader community rather than with the school alone. There is no doubt that schools should be involved in transition programs and maybe even play the leading role; however, many people outside the school also have a major influence on the ways in which children participate in school and school-related experiences. These groups include the children themselves, family and friends, educators in prior-to-school settings, health professionals, community workers, and community elders. No doubt many other groups have significant contributions to make in different contexts. In many instances, members of these groups have already formed relationships with the child and know a great deal about the child and his or her interests and abilities.

This view recognizes that dispositions, values, feelings, attitudes, and understandings are equally as important as skills and knowledge. For example, both adult and child participants in transition have identified positive dispositions about school as one of the key factors in a successful transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 1999a). If children learn dispositions from being around people who hold similar dispositions (Katz & Chard, 1987), then it is important that all involved in transition experiences reflect the positive aspects of starting school. They are likely to do so when they are actively involved in transition experiences or where their views have been sought and considered in the planning of transition experiences. The entire community benefits when children want to be at school, regard school as valuable, and experience school success.

In promoting transition programs that focus on relationships and extend beyond the school gate, we believe it is essential that the views and perspectives of children are considered. It can be tempting to regard children as the recipients of transition programs rather than as active participants who are shaped by and who shape the experiences. One of the aims of the Starting School Research Project is to reject the view that transition programs happen to children. We believe that children can and do make valuable contributions to transition programs and that listening to their views, responding to their challenges, and respecting their existing understandings can be an educational experience for all concerned.

Conclusion

In each of the research sites, members of the research team report that the *Guidelines for Effective Transition to School Programs* provide a sound basis for discussion and that this discussion supports the underlying themes of these guidelines: that positive and responsive relationships are vital to successful transitions and that effective transitions involve communities of individuals rather than individuals in communities.

The opportunity to work with diverse groups of people in different settings and contexts has enabled both the research team and those involved in the location groups to question some of the assumptions underlying transition programs and to work through these issues. The solutions and strategies that emerge from these interactions will continue to vary as each group grapples with the idiosyncrasies of their contexts. As the location groups continue to examine and evaluate their transition-to-school programs, we look forward to investigating the many and varied ways in which children, families, educators, and the broader community can benefit from their membership in school communities.

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Professional Growth Reconceptualized: Early Childhood Staff Searching for Meaning

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Abstract

This paper challenges traditional perspectives of professional development through a reconceptualization of early childhood professional growth. A review of the early childhood professional development literature reveals the problematic nature of the linear perspectives and deficit models of staff development prevalent in the early childhood field. In contrast to these models, the paper proposes alternative perspectives that recognize staff as empowered learners who build their working knowledge through spirals of engagement with many aspects of early childhood philosophy and practice over time. To illustrate the challenges to the dominant professional development paradigm, the paper discusses the professional development components of an Australian study of early childhood centers that began with off-site researcher-led inservice workshops and was followed by on-site staff-led discussion. The study involved approximately 75 staff members from 12 early childhood centers who participated in collaborative rethinking of approaches to planning and working with young children and their families. This approach to professional development was sustained by ongoing support of the researchers as critical friends who facilitated staff engagement through a sense of personal and professional agency. The approaches explored in this paper propose a constructivist view of professional growth that acknowledges the unique contribution of the personal professional knowledge of individuals and the importance of the orientation of individuals both to their work and to new ideas.

Introduction: A Context for Professional Growth

How does educational change occur for staff in the early childhood field when the curriculum content is not centrally mandated and the people involved have varying employer and work contexts? To explore that question, this paper reviews the early childhood professional development literature and proposes alternative perspectives that recognize staff as empowered learners who build their working knowledge through spirals of engagement over time. The issues raised by different perspectives are illustrated by a study that relates to the nature of curriculum decision making in settings for children ages 0-5 years in the Sydney region of New South Wales, Australia. The research has provided an impetus for rethinking early childhood professional development. Insights gained from involvement in the study reinforce the importance of recognizing the complexity of personal professional growth, particularly in the context of philosophical and pedagogical challenges from a rapidly changing field.

The current Australian sociopolitical context has tended to create an early childhood field in which staff feel underpaid and demoralized. It is therefore surprising to find—at the same time—a climate of intellectual inquisitiveness generating engagement with the complexities of reconceptualizing teachers' work. Dissatisfaction with current practices has provoked a wave of interest in alternative approaches to teacher planning that transcend the technicalities of simple record keeping. This practitioner energy inspired the researchers to participate in the dialogue about planning with practitioners in the field while investigating the context of professional growth.

Linear Perspectives

Spodek (1996) notes that the term "professional development" is ambiguous (p. 115). In an attempt to confront this ambiguity, it is valuable to review several dominant models of early childhood professional development. Several authors are key reference points. These include Katz (1977), VanderVen (1988, 1990), and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1994), each with a slightly different perspective. Katz (1977) described teachers in terms of their predominant concerns, in sequential order from self through to the profession at large. This *concerns-based model* of teacher development described teachers in terms of four stages from survival to maturity.

Rather than using individual concerns as the frame of reference, NAEYC (1994) focused on *qualifications* as a key discriminator. It proposed six levels of professional development from that of people starting competency-based or degree-oriented training through to the achievement of doctoral-level qualifications. NAEYC (1994) also offered nine principles of effective professional development.

In 1988, VanderVen described a five-stage *developmental sequence* towards professionalism (from novice to influential). She argued that the "development of professionalism is related to practitioner ability to assume the roles necessary to deliver the various functions of the field" (p. 138). This conceptualization focused on the differentiation of roles and the amount of supervision required for effective practice, while proposing a sequential model of the development of "professionalism." Spodek (1996) described VanderVen's stages of professional development as "ecologically based," building on Bronfenbrenner's conception of systems (e.g., orientation to the micro or the macro). VanderVen (1990) later proposed sets of adjectives that describe different responsibilities of staff on a three-stage career development track. The definition of "professionalism" vis-à-vis "professional development" is, at this point, problematic.

Challenging the Linear Perspective

The conceptualizations in VanderVen's papers (1988, 1990) seem to be framed by (and perhaps limited by) the American experience. "Professional development" carries different meanings in different circumstances. American early childhood settings have strikingly different cultural and contextual frames of reference than do those in Australia. For example, while it is easy to agree that "there are many gaps and discontinuities in the development of professionalism vis-à-vis today's workforce in early childhood education" (VanderVen, 1988, p. 157), it is more difficult to agree with the subsequent claim that "this is particularly apparent for the large novice-stage group, whose members provide a great amount of direct service, but whose potential for professional growth is in many instances modest" (p. 157). This statement seems a damning indictment of human potential, but it may be relevant for the context in which it was written.

Across the centers involved in the research reported later in this paper, there are staff members with minimal "professional preparation" or qualifications who, nevertheless, demonstrate insight and commitment to engage in ideas that are synonymous with professional growth. This situation is not a claim that the networked, informal professional involvement described in this study should replace or be equated with more formal study to gain qualifications. There is, however, an argument that a linear conception of professional development that equates with such study and qualifications is overly simplistic.

Saracho and Spodek (1993) analyzed and reviewed literature in the field of early childhood teacher professional development. While proposing suggestions for improvement in the existing conceptualizations, they did not offer a critique of the assumptions underlying the dominant "stages" conceptions. VanderVen (1994) analyzed and redefined the early childhood profession as contextual rather than linear. Nevertheless, the concept of professional development that she advocated still has a focus on the "transfer of knowledge and skills" (p. 86) rather than having a priority on socially constructed knowledge.

Rodd (1997) took on this challenge and argued:

> Some current approaches to professional development, such as those of Katz (1977) and VanderVen (1990), appear to take a Piagetian perspective, arguing that early childhood professionals need to develop in order to learn. Yet it could be argued that continued improvement in the quality of early childhood service provision appears to be more related to the Vygotskian (1962) perspective, where early childhood professionals…are supported by their colleagues, to learn in order to develop. (p. 1)

Piagetian conceptions suggest individuals in isolation moving along a qualification track, assuming a logical sequence of steps that require the transmission of skills to "develop." These seem to underestimate the complexity of possible processes and variation in individual experience. There are, however, other frames of reference that provide alternative perspectives to the concept of professional development.

Empowered Learners

Rather than conceptualizing professional development as either enabling participation in formal upgrading of qualifications (an approach that might be seen as ticking off the boxes involved in getting a piece of paper) or as providing steps towards acquiring a recommended change in practice (perhaps a mandated curriculum document), other possibilities may be more useful. For example, the recognition of staff as owners of personal professional knowledge, with intellectual and emotional investment in possible contributions to their own development, seems to be undervalued in much of the "stages" literature. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) wrote extensively on the importance of recognizing and valuing teachers' knowledge. A recognition of agency (Paris, 1993) is also missing from the sequential, qualifications-oriented approach to staff development.

Jones (1994) and Yinger and Hendricks-Lee (1993) emphasize the contributions of the learner. While Jones celebrates the valuing of teachers' stories, Yinger and Hendricks-Lee investigate "the nature and characteristics of what we often call 'working knowledge' that is, knowledge particularly useful to get things accomplished in practical situations" (p. 100). These orientations value the background and understandings that adults bring to their work. Clark (1992) supports this perspective in his statement: "Research on teacher thinking supports the position that teachers are more active than passive, more ready to learn than resistant, more wise and knowledgeable than deficient, and more diverse and unique than they are homogenous…" (p. 77).

He concludes that the responsibility for professional development must, therefore, be given to teachers themselves. It is not clear whether his assertion would extend to staff with limited qualifications or background in early childhood services, but the basic humanity and respect that are reflected in his position are noteworthy.

Part of the difficulty in attempting to comprehend approaches to early childhood professional development relates to status issues in the field. In relation to potential development of early childhood innovations, Rust (1993) states that one of the obstacles that must be confronted "is that early childhood education is not widely recognized as a distinct and well-articulated field of education. It is perceived as 'women's work,' with concomitant low status and low pay" (p. 104). These observations relate to sociopolitical contexts that must be integrated conceptually into models of professional development, rather than assuming that programs can proceed in "a context-free zone."

The literature on "teacher voice" adds to this argument. Ayers (1992) writes that "recovering the voice of the teacher—usually a woman, increasingly a person of color, often a member of the working poor—is an essential part of reconceptualizing the field of early childhood education" (p. 266). This recognition of the importance of valuing the learner's perspective and orientation relates well to an underlying philosophy of empowerment.

Ayers (1992) continues:

> Policymakers and scholars tend to speak for teachers, never with them. The question, "what can these teachers tell one another and the world about teaching and about children?" has largely been ignored in favor of more distanced questions, such as "How shall we explain what these teachers ought to know and what it must be like for them?" (p. 266)

His stance mirrors what we know about the nature of adult learning from the perspective of reflective practice and of valuing ownership of the process. It also helps to rectify the gaps in understanding that emanate from recognition of dominant groups to the exclusion of minorities.

A number of writers have identified the importance of individual responsibility for professional development within a supportive environment. For example, Duff, Brown, and Van Scoy (1995) explain: "Just as self-initiated activity is critical to the child's development, so are reflection, self-evaluation, and self-direction critical to the process of professional development" (p. 83). They argue that "many individuals within a collaborative work environment are intrinsically motivated to improve their professional competence" (p. 85). This recognition of the importance of the work environment is included in the early childhood management perspective of Bloom, Sheerer, and Britz (1991), who also focus on individual staff development. They provide a persuasive argument to encourage center directors to support staff members in their attempts to develop a "comprehensive and personalized staff development action plan" (p. 93). To accomplish this end, staff must "understand their own professional growth needs and strengths as contributing members to the center in which they work" (p. 106).

Similarly, Seng (1998) and Robert (2000) support individual approaches that build on strengths and respond to personal and professional needs rather than supporting traditional inservice training directed towards teaching competencies. Individual planning meetings to explore professional development opportunities are offered as a key component to Seng's approach. Personal vulnerability must be recognized in this context. Marsick and Watkins (1992) note that "adults have worked hard to become who they are; continuous learning demands that they continuously unlearn past lessons and become anew, which leaves them vulnerable" (p. 12). This reminder relates well to Bloom et al.'s suggestions for supportive directors' strategies.

Within this discussion of facilitative contexts, it is useful to acknowledge the nature of interactions between practitioners and "the professional developers" (often academics or systemic personnel). These interactions may vary on a continuum from distanced and hierarchical to collegial and collaborative. This relational aspect of professional development is often overlooked in consideration of possible professional development approaches. This area would benefit from further study in early childhood contexts.

The Sydney Study

Methodology

This study, conducted in early childhood settings for children ages 0-5 in the Sydney region of New South Wales, Australia, is included to exemplify the challenges to the dominant professional development paradigm. In this case, the professional development opportunities can be linked to a paper that invited the field to revisit accepted planning approaches (Fleet & Patterson, 1998). It situated planning processes within a larger sociocultural context and, among other things, challenged staff to consider worthwhile knowledge emerging from genuine interactions with children as a source for planning.

The authors presented information in workshop sessions related to shifts in pedagogical theories about work with young children and their families. Following a presentation about current thinking, staff participated in small-group sessions revisiting their practices and considering their work in the light of theoretical information presented. An opportunity was then provided for participant involvement in an ongoing study of planning processes through a request to invite the researchers to three regularly scheduled center planning meetings. These requests received a positive response from approximately 1 in 10 of participating centers. Those accepting the offer included staff who were confident about their current approaches as well as those who were rethinking practices. Approximately 75 staff members from 12 early childhood centers participated.

This stage of the research continued over 18 months. The researchers made repeated visits to 12 centers to attend planning meetings. The staff were not observed as "others," but included the researchers in ongoing discussions. This collaboration provided opportunities for professional development for both early childhood staff and researchers through philosophical discussions and practical decision making about planning and programming for children and relationships with families. Thus, there is a sequence of professional development opportunities from the publication of the original ideas, to ongoing workshops and conference presentations, to participant observation data gathering at the shared planning meetings.

Data collected included site notes, transcripts, and debriefing notes from researcher interpretative conversations after leaving the meetings. The site notes included information about the layout and provisioning of the educational environments, children's work, professional examples of recording formats, and observations of the interactions between staff and families. The meeting transcripts were returned to participants for verification, and several groups used the transcripts as springboards for further planning meetings. Contextual data and conversations were continually analyzed for emergent themes. Drafts of papers returned to staff also generated comment and insights that contributed to joint rethinking of emerging concepts and directions.

Subsequently, staff members were invited to be interviewed individually by a research assistant to enable perspectives to be stated that might not have been evident in the group planning meetings. The interviews included discussion about the usefulness of the researchers as collaborative participants as well as exploration of changes and the change processes themselves.

Findings

This study provided an opportunity to investigate components of a professional development sequence that began with off-site researcher-led inservice workshops and was followed by on-site staff-led discussions. The revisiting of professional provocations across sites and over time encouraged spirals of engagement with many aspects of early childhood philosophy and practice. Center-based staff and university-based researchers were all able to gain greater understanding through recursive cycles of investigation and problematizing of taken-for-granted staff behaviors. This approach to professional development was sustained by the support of the researchers as critical friends (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) who facilitated staff engagement through a sense of personal and professional agency.

Analysis of the data indicated the significant role of directors who lead staff in a culture of inquiry. In particular, the focus on the Sydney study as an example of rich professional development highlighted the importance of (1) valuing the learners' perceptions and knowledge in shaping the nature of inservice opportunities, (2) building on affective components including professional affirmation and personal motivation, and

(3) encouraging learner engagement by focusing on substantive, relevant content.

Melissa (a preschool director) reported that "the original meetings helped me develop an interest…so I have actually researched a lot of that this year. And that led to me organizing my time with the children better." Her comments reflect the opportunity to be involved in pedagogical encounters premised on valuing what the learner brings to the discussion, rather than predetermining outcomes. They also reflect a professional development philosophy that meets the learner at a point of interest. An important component of this approach to professional empowerment relates to attitudinal factors associated with affirmation and motivation. One toddler teacher commented, "You get stale sometimes and it has brought back that excitement…. Okay, we've done a good job; it's nice to hear that from other professionals."

Learner engagement presumes that the content of the pedagogical exchange is "worth knowing," that there is substance that requires moving beyond superficial behaviors. In this case, the work was embedded in principles of early childhood practice (Fleet & Patterson, 1998) that were valued by participants and seen as meaningful. For example, in referring to the authors, Annalise (a toddler teacher) commented,

> I was really impressed by the way they explained and talked about things that were meaningful in a child's life. They gave lots of examples and how that extended out; there were so many different branches to extend the child's thinking processes. I think it was good that they were thinking of different ways of taking us further into the future…we need to use our own minds because what might work here might not work elsewhere.

This valuing of relevant examples based on local contexts reflects the perception of integrity of content.

Subsequent interviews of staff by a research assistant added depth to the researchers' conceptualization of professional empowerment through spirals of engagement and confirmed the value of moving beyond traditional views of professional development. This conception can be characterized by the researchers' philosophy that values the learner's space, an affirmation of the learner's work, content that has personal and professional relevance as well as intellectual integrity, and the support of critical friends. These characteristics are evident in the voices of the staff who shared their insights with the interviewer.

Critical Friends

The final component of this characterization of professional empowerment resides in the importance of the role of "critical friends." In this study, the researchers acted as critical friends while participating in center-based staff meetings. The Sydney study highlights four different aspects of the relationship between staff and the researchers, which analysis of the interview data indicates that participants saw as important.

First, there was the importance of "an outside voice" to offer a new perspective on the work in the center. In speaking about the visits by the researchers, Lynne (a preschool staff member) commented,

> It gives us a chance to stop and reflect and evaluate as a whole. You know, answering to someone outside of "just us." It's been interesting. Sometimes they may raise issues that you mightn't have even thought of, or new ideas or challenges. And it's great getting that outside

> perspective too.... I think every center could do with that fresh approach.

Second, critical friends were valued for the positive feedback on work that was being undertaken in the center. For example, one staff member commented, "the biggest thing was the thought that we are on the right track, and they [the researchers] supported that what we were doing was positive and worthwhile." Third, staff indicated that they felt they had been given permission by the authors to try different ways of approaching professional practice. For example, at one center, the director noted, "They have assisted in making us feel more confident to change…that we can actually do it. Here are people who know more than us, saying, 'that's okay, you can do these things.'" At the same center, a teacher commented, "They put some questions to us that started us thinking about new ways we could develop on our own." Finally, the role of the researchers as "critical friends" included the asking of questions that challenged and extended thinking. As the director of a center, Susan, said, "Their suggestions have been very helpful, and I think there are things you don't think of yourself…and it's probably making me think more laterally about what we're doing." Annalise added, "I think you need people like that to come along and say, 'Okay, what are you up to? What about this? What about that?' New ideas are fantastic and exciting and pull the team together."

The combination of these characteristics resulted in a richness of experience for the staff who were involved. The opportunity to explore ideas over time enabled staff to revisit possibilities for exploration. This spiraling of engagement is a truly professional growth process. In her reflections, Annalise said,

> Those meetings we had were predominantly about planning and programming…the difficulties we had along the way…and when they came to visit we presented all our ideas. They praised us of course (as we expected that they would), and, um, then we were wondering if we really liked it. So as soon as they left, we threw all that out the window! When we were explaining it to them, we were like, "no that's not what we really want." So the next week we had a totally new idea, and we worked on that for not even a week, and we scrapped that model. So we went through quite a lot preparing ourselves to explain what we wanted. And that was just another part of the process. Because I think if we were doing it independently, we wouldn't have to explain, so we would have just thought it was right. But actually explaining it on a professional level, to someone who didn't know what we were doing, made us think about and understand what we really wanted with our planning and programming.

If one of the goals of professional development is the achievement of growth as reflected in reconceptualization of previous practices, then the sequence described here has been useful. Analysis of the data indicates that staff in most centers were modifying their practices or accepting the challenge of reflecting on their current approaches. There were staff members at two centers who offered to share their planning processes with the researchers, but who did not engage subsequently with the provocations for change. It seemed as though the challenges offered at the workshops were not perceived as relevant for these centers. For example, Tina (a preschool staff member) added a dissonant voice to the otherwise positive interview data. She mused,

> I guess with the meetings, I was thinking that we were going to learn a lot more from them…um…and a few times when questions were asked, we thought they weren't sort of answered. We were put off track because they sort of put it back onto us….I felt a bit…because I really wanted to know more….I just, I don't know, I couldn't see how it was all happening.

As might be expected, fluid approaches to promoting professional growth do not meet everyone's expectation. Some individuals may be used to transmission models of instruction and find interactive approaches disappointing, perhaps inadequate for their perceived needs.

If a director has not promoted reflective pedagogical dialogue, staff members may also lack the confidence or feel ill prepared to contribute to exchanges arising from pedagogical provocations or to link practice to theory in an explicit way. Directors who see themselves as leaders rather than managers have a key role in supporting staff as learners. This study indicates that facilitative directors support formal study by staff, expect discussion of ideas and approaches to planning, value the contribution of children and families, and provide time for professional reflection.

In centers where change occurred, data indicated that important elements in the process included facilitative work environments influenced by the director's leadership style (Fleet & Patterson, in press) and team discussions that provided opportunities for the social construction of knowledge. The commitment and enthusiasm of staff to rethinking their practice in the light of the nonprescriptive provocations offered in workshops and planning meetings highlight the value of flexible approaches to professional development.

Rethinking Current Approaches

Issues arising in the literature and in this study challenge us to rethink approaches to early childhood professional development. Each individual's experience of professional development is complex, unpredictable, and dependent on contextual influences. Limiting the discussion to "teacher inservice development" for example misrepresents the richness of growth contexts and overlooks the diversity of staff in early childhood centers.

It is salient to acknowledge the importance of a balance of peoples' skills, qualifications, backgrounds, and potential contributions to the life of the center. Degreed staff, particularly in director's positions, have key leadership roles to fulfill. A strong regulatory environment is necessary to maintain that aspect of quality. Nevertheless, professional development opportunities can usefully be explored outside the status/wages arguments. There is a tendency in the professional development literature to adopt a perspective that less-qualified people at the bottom of a staffing hierarchy "need to be developed." A contrary view is that all staff members can become more sophisticated in their understandings regardless of the starting point, given commitment, opportunity, and facilitative contexts.

There are many possible avenues for developing professionally. Individuals do not expand their thinking or change their practice in linear or evenly paced stages. In addition, variations in qualifications and experience must be considered in terms of people understanding and accepting the challenge of new ideas, including the willingness to put in the time and commitment necessary to reevaluate practice. While professional qualifications are essential for the quality of a children's service, the Sydney study suggests that staff with few formal qualifications may demonstrate as much insight and commitment to rethinking their own practice as do some of their colleagues who have more experience and formal qualifications.

In rethinking current approaches to professional development, it is also important to problematize the content of professional development experiences. As Kwong and Kwong (2000) note, traditional models of professional development privilege theories over practice, while practitioners tend to privilege practice over theories. To overcome this dichotomy, Kwong and Kwong advocate a dialectic mode of linking theory and practice. This focus on the dialectic provides recognition of the learner's perspective while also valuing discipline knowledge. It is a focus that is reflected in this study within the interplay of discussions between the staff and researchers. The center-based discussions enabled the counter-positioning of daily practice with accepted beliefs, the exploring of tensions between statements about guiding theories and demonstrated approaches to work with children and adults.

Conclusion

The concept of professional development often includes an expectation of self-reflection and change in a staff member's philosophy, approach, or practices. The argument presented in this paper suggests that the influences that promote change derive from a range of sources. Efforts to portray these change processes might be compared to a complex weather map. One possible image is that of ripples of influence moving out from each change impetus (perhaps a conference or workshop). There are also staff members moving into the field of change with other experiences (the influence of formal study that has been undertaken elsewhere, activities of other regional support groups, and inservice activities with related challenges). The result is a process that is enriched and energized by diverse influences coming into a geographic area. Therefore, identifying all influences on professional growth of particular individuals is problematic. Principally, however, the process must involve inquiry, engagement, and agency, supported by recurring contextualized interaction.

In supporting a particular change, it is helpful when there is a "critical mass," a large number of people in an area who are all confronting and exploring similar aspects of their work. A specific change (e.g., related to constructivist planning) may be more likely to be sustained or extended into deep learning if there are opportunities for people to engage with waves of related ideas. Unfortunately, practitioners seem to be regularly assaulted with single unrelated inservice sessions on different ideas or topics, rather than having opportunities to revisit or consolidate new challenges. Perhaps more networking by inservice providers would help alleviate this problem, as would an explicit focus on providing concentric circles of opportunity.

This paper has suggested that versions of early childhood professional development that promote, for example, a move from being a "nonprofessional" to being a "professional" (VanderVen, 1988) are overly simplistic. The application of developmental stage theory to peoples' lives ignores the complexity of workplace circumstances and the role of interaction in supporting the social construction of staff professional knowledge. Work in the early childhood field is diverse and sophisticated; professional development opportunities for staff need to embrace complexity and move beyond narrowly focused instructional models of adult learning. The importance of a philosophy of staff ownership of ideas rather than transmission of knowledge is a critical component in conceptions of growth possibilities as multi-layered and fluid. Constructivist perspectives acknowledge the unique contribution of the personal professional knowledge of individuals and the importance of the orientation of individuals both to their work and to new ideas. The conceptualization of professional empowerment through spirals of engagement provides possibilities for the field to consider as a direction for growth.

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The Synthesis of Writing Workshop and Hypermedia-Authoring: Grades 1-4

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Abstract

A process writing and hypermedia literacy program was designed, taught, and evaluated by early childhood teachers. The program, funded through a Goals 2000 grant, took place in a public school summer camp for children (*n*=160) ages 6-9 in a public school in rural northeast Mississippi. Reactive-participant data collection methods were used to enable the teachers to react to the needs of the children while collecting data on their experiences. Children experienced an 8-week process writing/hypermedia curriculum that required each learner to create a "hypermedia story" using HyperStudio 3.0. Process writing consisted of children engaging in writing using five discrete stages: (1) brainstorming, (2) drafting, (3) revising, (4) editing, and (5) publishing. Hypermedia-authoring took place through the use of HyperStudio 3.0 hypermedia presentation software that supported text, audio, video, and graphics tools. Field notes were analyzed using pattern matching and revealed differences and similarities between the younger (6-7) and older (8-9) children. Younger children preferred to create linear hypermedia stories (beginning, middle, and end), whereas older children preferred nonlinear programming. Additionally, younger children were less comfortable drafting on the computer, choosing instead to use concrete materials (paper, crayons, scissors, watercolors, and markers). Older children overwhelmingly preferred to draft on the computer in HyperStudio. In general, all participants exhibited high motivation and intense focus in all aspects of the program, particularly for their work on the computers. Results indicate the need for early childhood educators to evaluate the curriculum, instruction, and assessment process for writing with hypermedia.

Background

The current case study was conducted in a public school summer camp titled "Summer Art Integration: Reading and Writing through the Arts." The summer school was funded by a Goals 2000 grant to meet the needs of the children in grades 1-4 who were identified by their classroom teachers as performing poorly in literacy areas of the curriculum. The role of the authors of this study was to direct, teach, and evaluate the writing instruction of the camp by collecting data via field notes responding to students interacting with hypermedia software. The field notes included observations, interviews, and examinations of narrative samples. The writing program that we designed integrated the Writing Workshop approach (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1983) (http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/instrctn/in5lk11.htm) and hypermedia-authoring[1] using HyperStudio 3.0 (Wagner, 1998) software (http://www.hyperstudio.com).

Process Writing: Writing Workshop[2]

Writing Workshop was first developed by Graves (1983) and structured the teaching of writing into five categories: (1) brainstorming, (2) drafting, (3) revising, (4) editing, and (5) publishing. Graves defined six key points inherent to the curriculum: (1) organize the classroom for writing by conducting group meetings; (2) inundate children with literature; (3) take the time to write while the children write in order to set the tone for a positive writing atmosphere; (4) conduct conferences with children at various stages of the writing process to empower the learner with skills to revise for meaning and edit for mechanics; (5) keep the mechanics of writing (usage, punctuation, and handwriting) separate from the construction of the content of writing; and (6) observe, assess, and record how your students develop as writers, through journaling and creation of record-keeping portfolios (collections of students' works). Graves (1983) derived these six parts to clarify the enacting of the process-oriented writing curriculum in his Writing Workshop curriculum model.

While Graves (1983) generally discussed the transformation of an entire classroom into a Writing Workshop, Calkins (1983) provided the practitioner, in *Lessons from a Child,* with the perspective of the individual child's experience as a developing writer in a Writing Workshop environment. Two main points were emphasized by Calkins within the Writing Workshop curriculum model: (1) after a period of time in a Writing Workshop, the student internalizes methods such as revision, as well as processes inherent in the other writing stages; and (2) conferencing, or the method of communication between teacher and child during Writing Workshop, can occur at any Writing Workshop stage and, more importantly, can be effectively accomplished via peer conferencing. Thus, Calkins and Harwayne (1991) and Atwell (1998) extended the concept of Writing Workshop to include a student-centered approach via peer conferencing, as opposed to a solely teacher-directed approach, for the organization and practice of writing in the classroom (Strech, 1994).

Rationale for Hypermedia Writing Instruction[3]

Research from the late 1980s to present conducted on hypermedia writing curriculum revealed that writing instruction was facilitated in the following ways: (1) student cultural learning styles needs were met, (2) narrative and episodic story structure was enhanced, and (3) motivation to write was increased. Smith (1992) engaged Navajo elementary boarding school children (grades 3-6) in the implementation of the hypermedia authoring software Linkway, which supported the integration of text, audio, video, and graphics for IBM-compatible computers, similar to HyperStudio (Wagner, 1998) for Macintosh and IBM operating environments. The children were led through the creation of stories and were encouraged to integrate familiar images in picture form into their documents. Results of the study indicated three benefits of hypermedia writing: (1) different cultural learning styles were met, (2) a student's lack of background experience was addressed in a meaningful way through the use of multimedia images, and (3) motivation was increased as evidenced by the children's fascination with the hypermedia writing environment. Daiute and Morse (1994) conducted an in-depth case study of eight children (grades 3-4) identified as reluctant writers. The study utilized Personal Media Studio, a multimedia writing program. Results of extensive narrative data indicated that, for both high-ability and low-ability participants, the learning of written language can be enhanced by multimedia environments. Students were highly motivated, particularly when they integrated pictures and sounds into their stories.

McLellan (1992), in case study research of a hypermedia writing curriculum, investigated how elementary students (grade 5) would excel in narrative writing in the HyperCard environment. Students developed their own stories and manipulated the nonlinear hypertextual features of the software. The level of details were strengthened in both narrative and episodic story structures, and McLellan noted that the children quickly adapted to the hypermedia environment.

Swan and Meskill (1996) found hypermedia to be a potentially suitable environment for literacy learning that included support for (1) independent learning, (2) cooperative learning, (3) nonlinear representations of knowledge, (4) a wide array of learning styles, and (5) enabling teachers to evaluate their own ideas of the role of text in the teaching of writing and reading. According to Ayersman (1996), constructivist theory supports the use of student-created hypermedia documents containing presentations with any combination of text, hypertext, graphics, audio, and video. Hypermedia attributes (text, hypertext, graphics, audio, and video) were identified as features conducive to the teaching of writing by examining the combination of writing with hypermedia elements (Takayoshi, 1996; Ayersman, 1996). Hypermedia documents contain hypertext, which was defined by Palumbo and Prater (1993) as dynamic text that allows the writer to connect text to another hyperdocument which in turn could also be connected or linked to other hyperdocuments. Thus, hypertext was thought to support learner-created, nonlinear formats as well as linear formats. Nonlinear hypertext is text not sequenced in the usual straight line consisting of a beginning, middle, and end. It was considered to be advantageous because it mirrored the associative manner in which people think (Takayoshi, 1996).

Additional reasons for hypermedia enhancing and supporting writing instruction were conveyed by Yang (1996), who stated that hypermedia writing environments can support a variety of cognitive processes conducive to the learning of writing by facilitating the processes of organizing, selecting, and connecting. These three processes identified by Yang were thought to enhance what Charney (1994) referred to as "idea manipulation" or discourse synthesis in writing (p. 239). Palumbo and Prater (1993) defined discourse synthesis as the hybrid act of reading and writing that occurs as information from a variety of sources is organized with hypertext.

Finally, the multimedia features inherent in hypermedia learning environments were identified by Daiute and Morse (1994) as conducive to the enhancement of young children's writing. Daiute and Morse also found that student manipulation of sounds and images in the form of concrete cultural symbols may aid in the learning of text. They further rationalized that:

> Since some of the functions of written language, like providing information and means of expression, can be served by other symbols systems, it is worth exploring children's use of a variety of symbol systems and relationships between visual systems, aural systems, and text. (p. 221)

The fertile ground that hypermedia composing can support dictated that the writing/hypermedia program use a flexible, simple, yet powerful software environment.

HyperStudio 3.0 Hypermedia-Authoring Environment

HyperStudio offers a child-friendly, icon-driven, hypermedia-authoring environment. Children can create hypermedia (text, audio, video, and graphics) "pages" that can be simply programmed to allow the reader to travel from one chunk of information to another through the creation of nodes. A node is a piece of hypermedia programming that dictates the direction the reader of the document can move within a screen. This mode of travel, "hypertravel," allows the author to create linear or nonlinear travel within a document. The researcher/instructor of the current study used the Writing Workshop process to guide children through the curriculum. The mini-lesson (Atwell, 1998) served as a primary instructional method through which the children were guided through the writing process.

Mini-Lessons

For writing on paper, and learning and writing on HyperStudio, children took part in a series of mini-lessons (Atwell, 1998) designed to scaffold writing and computer skills through student-directed inquiry (Barrows, as cited in Checkley, 1997). During the initial stages (brainstorming and drafting) of creating stories in HyperStudio, students were assigned the task of using all tools in the HyperStudio Tool area to design their title card (a card being equivalent to a page in a book). Students then experimented with the Tool Box[4] by manipulating tools with the mouse and keyboard as they designed their cards. While no "right" answer existed for this problem-solving exercise, children discovered, as they created, the sophisticated functions of the tools as they needed them.

Each work session concluded with a summary meeting where teachers asked the children about their experimentation and creation on HyperStudio or paper. Teachers transcribed children's answers onto chart paper mounted on the wall. Taking dictation on chart paper served to focus the collective understandings of the children and disseminate knowledge learned by individuals to the group. Following the summary meeting, children engaged in reflective writing before making the transition to their next class. Children navigated the six stages of writing using both paper and pencil and HyperStudio in different combinations of transitions. Transitions called for children to either work on paper and make the transition to a computer, work entirely on the computer, or work entirely on paper.

Children were provided with several days of writing and HyperStudio open-ended exercises. Writing stages and methods for manipulating the numerous functions and tools available in HyperStudio were discussed with the whole group, small groups, and individuals. Sessions consisted of a variety of problem-solving exercises. For writing, children were guided through Writing Workshop stages and asked to reflect on what worked well and what could have worked better.

In sessions for learning HyperStudio, the whole group as well as small groups participated in brief discussions of tool use, function examples, and interesting features via a television screen connected to a computer with a television-to-monitor adapter. The television was utilized to enhance discussions and demonstrations in the same manner a blackboard is used, affording children the opportunity to receive verbal and visual instructions during meetings before proceeding to the computers.

Assumptions of the Study

Based on this history, four assumptions guided this study. First, the teaching of narrative writing provides learning opportunity for analysis and reflection (Gearhart, Herman, Baker, & Whittaker, 1992). Second, the Writing Workshop approach represents an effective method for the teaching of narrative writing (Graves, 1983; Calkins & Harwayne, 1991). Third, appropriate integration of computers into the curriculum can enhance teaching and learning (Campbell, 1996). Fourth, teaching that provides children with ill-structured problems,[5] as opposed to well-structured problems,[6] offers child-centered problem-solving opportunities that enable children to apply knowledge (Barrows as cited in Checkley, 1997).

Questions of the Study

The question for this study was previously voiced by Takayoshi (1996) concerning writing in current computer environments: What will happen to the roles and processes of writers as they engage in hypermedia and hypertextual writing in a Writing Workshop environment? Three additional questions emanate from this primary question. First, at what Writing Workshop stage (inventing/brainstorming, drafting/composing, revising/conferencing, and editing/publishing) are children most comfortable and productive in making the transition from paper to computer? Second, how do children prefer to manipulate hypermedia and linearity in their narratives? Hypermedia, as referred to here, contains information from a variety of media including text, video, sound, and graphics (Palumbo & Prater, 1993). Linearity, for HyperStudio-created narratives, represents the linking of HyperStudio cards (or pages) in linear or nonlinear order. Third, if children write a story on paper and then transcribe it onto HyperStudio, are certain hypermedia elements (video, graphics, and audio) utilized by the children to replace text where meaning would be understandably equivalent, or are hypermedia elements utilized to add to the narrative without replacing text?

Design

Participants

Student-participants (*n*=160) in this study were first- through fourth-grade children, from one elementary school in northeast-central Mississippi. The student body was predominantly African American, and students were selected for the study based upon their teachers' recognition of their literacy skill (reading, writing, and communicating) weaknesses. Permission for participants was retained by the teachers.

In addition to the two teacher-researchers, four teachers were selected based upon their agreement to teach the HyperStudio/writing curriculum. All four teachers were female (two African American and two European American). The four teachers participated in a summer technology and arts program and received HyperStudio and process-oriented writing curriculum training from the researcher. The teachers participated on a voluntary basis and signed a teacher consent form.

Action Research: Teacher as Researcher

Holistic single-case study design (Yin, 1994) was implemented in this study with the unit of analysis (Merriam, 1988) consisting of the children's experience in the curriculum. This design was selected to provide voice for unique situations such as the alternative curriculum examined here (Merriam, 1988). Additionally, this design allowed the teacher-researchers to avoid predetermined views of what data were "important" and what were "not important." This open-ended approach toward data collection was utilized to avoid teacher bias.[7] The subunits were the numerous transitions children experienced when writing on paper, paper and computer, and computer. For example, transitions from drafting to composing in HyperStudio or learning "Tools" in HyperStudio to publishing were observed because they defined the quality and organization of the experimental teaching and learning experience.

Data Collection

As participant-observers (teachers as researchers), the role of wearing two hats dictated that we employ reactive field-entry methods. Reactive field-entry methods call for the researcher to be available to children being studied, allowing the children to initiate contacts (Corsaro, as cited in Hatch, 1995). As a precaution against observer bias, when not teaching, teachers took advantage of free moments to engage in participant-observation methods of data collection. This data collection included run-and-write field notes, informal discussions, sample reflections, narratives, and child responses to questions regarding transitions from paper and pencil to HyperStudio software. These multiple sources of evidence were converged to insure the inclusion of as many perspectives as possible (Yin, 1994).

Analysis and Discussion

Roles and Processes of Writing

The roles and processes of writing with the addition of HyperStudio were affected in different ways. Children expressed pride and ownership in their paper and electronic narratives after engaging in the many weeks of problem solving required to create the narratives. Merely working on a computer at any Writing Workshop stage infused excitement toward narrative writing. Child excitement and fascination with working in HyperStudio enveloped the Writing Workshop with a feverishly positive aura—perhaps, as Campbell (1996) relates, because intertextual experiences interweaving image, sound, and graphic forms mirror everyday environments. It is important to point out here, as did Kumpulainen (1994) in another study, that child excitement while using computers focused on the child's creation on the screen and not simply the computer itself, thus the effectiveness of the curriculum behind the computer use remains critically important. Many children viewed the computer as a facilitator of writing. Sarah, 8 years old, worked for an hour writing on HyperStudio and stated, "it's faster, you don't get tired, and you can erase easier." Bobby, a 6-year-old boy, commented about the benefits of writing on a computer, "it helped by giving me words and things like that." Whether real or imagined, the computer served as a comfortable and exciting environment for writing.

Transition Preferences in Creative Writing with HyperStudio

Older children preferred to avoid transitions from paper to computer, choosing instead to write in all Writing Workshop stages in HyperStudio. The drawback to this preference was that, as Takayoshi (1996) points out, discrete stages of writing so clearly demarcated on paper (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) lose distinctiveness on the computer. Younger children tended to lose direction while creating their narratives in the beginning stages of Writing Workshop. For them, clearly demarcated stages of writing, so clearly evident on paper drafts, disappeared on the computer. Six-year-old Anthony, while working during the first draft stage of Writing Workshop, proudly answered the teacher's question of how his first draft was coming along, "I got to make my pictures, it was a dollhouse. I made bricks for my background. I started typing. My title was Hydraulics." Anthony, while undoubtedly engaging in worthwhile experimentation, lost focus that the five stages of process writing assuredly would have provided.

Preferences for Manipulating Hypermedia and Linearity

Initially children preferred to apply only linear formats (cards, or pages, sequenced in a linear order) to their narratives, but as they gained experience, in both HyperStudio and Writing Workshop, children tended to introduce nonlinearity (cards sequenced in nonlinear form) as embellishments to their narratives. Children expressed excitement when, in reading a HyperStudio stack (narrative made up of cards), they could travel in a nonlinear fashion. Perhaps this preference for nonlinearity derives from, as Palumbo and Prater (1993) point out, the true nature of associative thinking, which is nonlinear.

Text in Paper Versus HyperStudio Narratives

Younger children neglected to include complete texts from their paper-produced texts when they made the transition to HyperStudio, choosing instead to concentrate on using art and design tools. On the other hand, older children transcribed their complete narrative texts from paper drafts to HyperStudio drafts and chose to integrate hypermedia elements of sound, images, and design to enhance their original narratives.

Understandably, younger children lacked patience when it came time to engage in the menial task of transcription, whereas older children were so infatuated with putting their narratives onto the computer that the task was not perceived as an obstacle. Thus, for younger children, guided writing on the computer for the first draft stage of Writing Workshop can serve to alleviate problems of transcription, albeit with an accompanying loss of awareness of the discrete stages of Writing Workshop.

Conclusions of the Study

This study addressed the integration of narrative writing with hypermedia software. Two learning environments exceedingly conducive to student-directed problem solving indicated that children were motivated to express themselves when text and hypermedia elements were integrated. For example, during a problem-solving challenge, 6-year-old Sammy responded, "I like creating writing because we get to go on the computers, like the time the teacher told me to do something and I did not understand and I did anything and I did it right." Sammy felt the anxiety, the challenge, and reward that the integrated curriculum afforded him.

The current study illuminated the developmental manner in which child preferences progressed from the use of concrete materials to the use of hypermedia elements. Children ages 6 through 7 preferred to use such materials as paper, crayons, scissors, watercolors, and markers through four of the five discrete narrative writing stages (brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing). These children tended to make the transition to the hypermedia environment only upon final electronic publication of their story. On the other hand, children ages 8 through 9 demonstrated their comfort in using hypermedia elements throughout all stages of narrative writing. These findings suggest that early childhood teachers need to be sensitive to the transitions that children experience when navigating from concrete materials to hypermedia elements within the five stages of process writing. In general, these findings are important for teachers who plan on integrating process writing and hypermedia in their classrooms in a developmentally appropriate manner. Further research into curriculum that integrates literacy and hypermedia is needed to develop appropriate teaching practices:

- Does the integration of process writing and hypermedia elements improve writing skill?
- What definitions and emphases of literacy do early childhood teachers have for children: primarily verbal/textual or inclusive of other meaning-based symbols—pictures, sounds, video, etc.?
- Do children need to learn how to express themselves in hypermedia in a world moving toward increasingly electronic forms of expression?
- Who controls how teachers integrate instructional technology into their classrooms: school districts, technology trainers, school-based administrators, or teachers?

The current study, conducted by teachers, emphasized a teacher-created curriculum and instruction with a high degree of experimentalism. It is the view of the authors that teachers must experiment and evaluate their own teaching and learning environments. Campbell (1996) articulated a similar sentiment by stating that research must critically examine instructional technology uses in alternative curriculum (Campbell, 1996).

Notes

1. Hypermedia-authoring, hypermedia composing, and hypermedia writing are used interchangeably, and all refer to an integration of writing curriculum using a computer environment, that is, "hypermedia" that supports text, audio, video, and graphics.

2. Process Writing and Hypermedia-Authoring sections are adapted from Mott (1998), an unpublished dissertation.

3. The current section is based upon Mott and Hare (1999), which further investigates the relationship between the use of hypermedia software integrated with process writing.

4. See HyperStudio Version 3.0 Tools at http://www.hyperstudio.com/downloads/index.html.

5. Ill-structured problems allow the opportunity for multiple avenues of exploration.

6. Well-structured problems contain predetermined solutions thus inhibiting avenues of exploration.

7. The qualitative approach adopted in the current study was designed as much to raise and identify questions emanating from the experimental curriculum as it was to formally evaluate the entire experience.

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Building Equitable Staff-Parent Communication in Early Childhood Settings: An Australian Case Study

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Abstract

International research has consistently found that good staff-parent relationships in early childhood centers benefit children, staff, and parents. Given these findings, the Australian federal government's Quality Improvement and Accreditation Scheme (QIAS) requires centers to involve parents in their programs. However, international research has also found that early childhood staff are anxious about their relationships with parents. This article describes a study in which early childhood staff in Australia were asked about their experiences with parent involvement. It draws on those interviews to consider communication strategies to create equitable relationships between staff and parents.

Background to the Study

Communication between parents and staff is an important part of the daily life of early childhood centers, and international research has shown that good staff-parent communication contributes significantly to the success of early childhood programs in several ways. Researchers have claimed that good communication between staff and parents (as well as good communication between staff) is a prerequisite for high-quality care and education of young children (Doherty-Derkowski, 1995); that it positively influences children's cognitive and social development, increasing their educational success (e.g., Laloumi-Vidali, 1997; Endsley, Minish, & Zhou, 1993; Studer, 1993/94); and that it contributes to good relations between children and between staff and children (e.g., Smith & Hubbard, 1988). Researchers have also claimed that parent involvement in their children's early education increases parents' understanding of appropriate educational practices and improves children's development (e.g., Gelfer, 1991); that it improves children's educational outcomes, especially literacy (e.g., Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, & Miller-Johnson, 2000; Cooter, Mills-House, Marrin, Mathews, Campbell, & Baker, 1999; Baker, Allen, Shockley, Pellegrini, Galda, & Stahl, 1996); and that it improves parental commitment to schooling (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). Finally, researchers argue that parental involvement contributes to national development (e.g., Cone, 1993; Hannon, 1995; Cairney, 1997; Koralek & Collins, 1997); and that it benefits business by creating a more literate and, therefore, a more productive workforce (PFIE, 1997). Similar benefits have been claimed in studies of the effects of school-parent partnerships on children's learning and achievement levels (Booth & Dunn, 1996).

Despite the enthusiasm for greater parental involvement in early education (e.g., Studer, 1993/94; Swick, 1994; Johnson, Walker, & Rodriguez, 1996; Hepworth Berger, 1995), much of the burgeoning literature about the topic is concerned with its associated problems. Staff-parent communication has been seen as problematic in diverse countries, including Greece (Laloumi-Vidali, 1997), Australia (Ebbeck & Glover, 1998), the United Kingdom (Moore & Klass, 1995), the United States (Rescorla, 1991), Taiwan (Liu & Chien, 1998), Switzerland (Unteregger-Mattenberger, 1995), and Japan (Huira, 1996). The problems are diverse. For example, staff-parent relationships are often strained and not always meaningful (Kasting, 1994; Elliot, 1998), staff struggle to know how best to communicate with parents (Wright-Sexton, 1996) and are often anxious about it (Studer, 1993/94), and staff are often reluctant to talk to parents (Huira, 1996). The explanations of those problems include inadequate staff training in staff-parent communication (Laloumi-Vidali, 1997), disagreements between staff and parents about what is appropriate education for young children (Hyson, 1991; Rescorla, 1991; Stipek, Rosenblatt, & DiRocco, 1994; Unteregger-Mattenberger, 1995; Liu & Chien, 1998), cultural differences between staff and parents (Gonzalez-Mena, 1992; Espinosa, 1995; Coleman & Churchill, 1997; Ebbeck & Glover, 1998), and staff beliefs that parents need educating to improve their capacity to help children's learning (Gelfer, 1991; Stipek, Rosenblatt, & DiRocco, 1994; Moore & Klass, 1995; Laloumi-Vidali, 1997).

In Australia, parent involvement in early childhood education is a precondition of government funding to child care centers. The Australian federal government's Quality Improvement and Accreditation Scheme (QIAS) requires a center to involve parents in planning its programs, administering its services, and evaluating their quality; and QIAS specifies standards and conditions that child care centers must meet to be eligible for formal accreditation and government funding (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993). Before the QIAS was introduced, approaches to parent involvement varied considerably because Australian child care center staff decided for themselves how (and how much) to involve parents in program planning, service administration, and quality evaluation. For example, community-based services sought to empower parents by involving them in decision making and administration, while other services involved parents in quality assurance through formal and informal surveys of customer satisfaction (Broinowski, 1994). No formal evaluation of the QIAS has yet been published to ascertain if and how approaches to parent involvement have changed or how parent involvement is currently practiced. Such evaluation is timely: by August 2000, every child care center in Australia had joined the scheme and 94% had been accredited (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 2000).

Research Methods

The authors examined staff views on staff-parent relationships, using the model of knowledge-power relationships in staff-parent communication outlined by Hughes and

MacNaughton (1999). In 2000, a small, exploratory, qualitative research study was undertaken with 15 early childhood staff members in 3 QIAS-accredited child care centers in Victoria, Australia. The study aimed to discover fresh dimensions (Kvale, 1996) of staff-parent relationships, and it addressed two questions:

- How do these early childhood staff members understand and practice parent involvement?
- How can these understandings be best theorized and related to the international field of early childhood education?

Research Techniques

Three techniques were used to collect empirical data about how staff understand and practice parent involvement. First, in a structured confidential, self-completed questionnaire, participants described their preservice training and cultural background and gave their views about (1) involving parents, (2) communicating effectively with parents, (3) meeting QIAS standards of parent involvement, and (4) the goals of parent involvement. Second, a group discussion (audiotaped and transcribed) was held at each center. Each discussion was semi-structured and used open-ended questions and a "hypothetical" situation to investigate staff's experiences, channels, and practices of communication with parents. Participants were eager to share their views about the topic, and so the discussion leader simply posed the open-ended questions, outlined the "hypothetical" situation, and listened to participants' responses. (Such a "passive" role is not, of course, always possible [Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990].) Third, each participant in the group discussions was subsequently interviewed by telephone to counter three potential common problems of group discussions: one participant's domination, some participants' reluctance to participate fully, and "groupthink" (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). The telephone interviews allowed each participant to comment on whether, how, and to what extent their group discussion had included their particular views and practices. In the event, each participant said that they had been comfortable in their group discussion, that it had included their views, and that they had nothing to add.

Participants

The researchers invited three centers to participate in the research project, and all accepted. Each center operated a parent involvement program in line with QIAS requirements and consequently had achieved three-year accreditation status with QIAS. All staff at each center—a total of 35—were asked to participate as individuals, and 15 accepted. Each of the 15 was asked to complete a questionnaire to profile the participant. The centers were chosen using purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to maximize differences in the demographic characteristics of their staff and parents. Each center reflected a specific set of staff-parent relationships:

- Center 1 is a rural, community-based service. Parents are primarily Anglo-Australian. Of the 14 staff, 5 participated in the study. All 5 were Anglo-Australian and had formal early childhood qualifications.
- Center 2 is a metropolitan service on a university campus. Parents are from a range of cultural and class backgrounds. Of the 10 staff, 7 participated in the study. Four of them were Anglo-Australian and had formal early childhood qualifications; 3 were from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds and had no formal early childhood qualifications.

- Center 3 is an inner-urban, community-based service. Parents are primarily from an Anglo-Australian, middle-class background. Of the 9 staff, 3 participated in the study. All 3 were Anglo-Australian and had formal early childhood qualifications.

In summary, the 15 participants in the study were characterized as described in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants in the Study

Center Type/ No. of Participants	**Formal Qualification**		**No Formal Qualification**	
	Anglo-Australian	Non-Anglo-Australian	Anglo-Australian	Non-Anglo-Australian
Center 1: rural, community-based *5 participants*	5	0	0	0
Center 2: metropolitan, university-based *7 participants*	4	0	0	3
Center 3: urban, community-based *3 participants*	3	0	0	0
Total: 15	12	0	0	3

The centers and the participating staff did not represent centers and staff in Australia as a whole. In Australia, child care centers differ widely in location and in physical environment, as well as in the ethnicity and class of their staff and of the people who use them. Such diversity precludes generalizing data from a few centers to all—or even most—of them, which is why the study sought qualitative rather than quantitative data. However, the study suggests themes and issues that could guide a broader and deeper study of parent involvement in Australia's QIAS centers—especially the extent of staff ambivalence about parent involvement.

Data Analysis

This article draws primarily on transcriptions of the three audiotaped group discussions, because participants' responses—especially to the "hypothetical" instance of parent involvement—generated rich empirical data. The empirical data were analyzed in three stages. Stage 1 categorized participants' statements, stage 2 categorized the themes underlying them, and stage 3 was a metacategory—it collated the categories into four interpretive case studies. This staged process of data analysis drew on structural corroboration (Eisner, 1991), that is, data from individual participants were used to test the broad data generated through the first two stages and to generate a set of case studies exemplifying the study's key themes and issues.

Stage 1 detailed the discussions' manifest (visible) content, that is, the issues participants raised. Stage 2 detailed the discussions' latent content, that is, the themes underlying participants' comments. Techniques of knowledge-power analysis (Foucault, 1980) were used to examine how participants' identities as professionals and experts both constituted and were constituted by specific discourses (e.g., developmentally appropriate practice), specific texts (e.g., the QIAS principles and guidelines), and specific practices (e.g., staff-parent communication), and to examine the power effects of such mutual constitution. Stage 3 collated the results of the first two stages into four interpretive case studies of parent involvement. Each case study expressed the discussions' manifest and latent content as specific parent involvement strategies, and each case study included communication strategies that staff associated with good parent involvement.

Staff who participated in this study understood parent involvement in many different ways, each expressing particular relations between knowledge and power. To tease-out those relations, the authors generated a set of analytical questions arising from each case study, using the results of the third stage of the analysis. The questions explore whether and to what extent staffs' understandings and practices of parent involvement subordinated parental knowledge to professional knowledge and how equitable parent involvement might be created. Their purpose is to suggest new perspectives on the continuing "problem" of parent involvement by specifically focusing attention on how equitable the assumptions underpinning specific understandings and practices were in each case study.

The process of generating the analytical questions drew on the discussions by Hughes and MacNaughton (2000, 1999) of knowledge-power relationships. In summary, Hughes and MacNaughton (1999) examined 162 items published in the 1990s that focused on parent involvement and concluded that knowledge-power relations are at the core of staff-parent relationships. They found that staff-parent communication is generally problematic because staff assume that their expert knowledge of the child is "the (scientific) truth" and dismiss or ignore competing kinds of knowledge as unscientific—anecdotal, unsystematic, and lacking a theoretical base. Thus, in much of the early childhood literature concerning parent involvement, parents' knowledge of the child is dismissed or ignored as inadequate, misguided, or just plain wrong. From this perspective, good staff-parent communication means experts imparting the truth about children to people who lack it, and good parent involvement requires parents to admit their ignorance. Hughes and MacNaughton (1999) suggest that staff can create new knowledge-power relations with parents through "communicative collaboration" that acknowledges, respects, and uses parental knowledge of the child:

> Through such communicative collaboration, staff and parents can challenge the "traditional" view that expertise is neutral, independent, and "external" to social relations, as it were. In its place, they can "co-create" expertise as both the foundation and the outcome of social relations between them—as both the starting point of communicative collaboration and its continuing product. (p. 31)

Research Findings

Participants in this exploratory study were ambivalent about involving parents in their programs. They dutifully expressed the prevailing belief that parent involvement was a good thing for parents, staff, and children (e.g., Cairney, 1997; Cone, 1993; Hannon, 1995; Kasting, 1994). However, participants knew that parent involvement was hard, because developing shared understandings with parents about their child's best interests is neither easy nor guaranteed.

Stage 1 Findings:
Manifest Issues in Staff Understandings and Practices of Parent Involvement

Four interrelated understandings were common to the three centers:

- Parent involvement is problematic and complex.
- Parent involvement is crucial to effective work with young children.
- Informal, verbal channels of communication are crucial in creating and maintaining parent involvement.
- The QIAS emphasis on formal and written channels of communication is (in the view of several staff members) irrelevant to the practicalities of building meaningful communication with parents and, hence, accountability to them.

Two interrelated practices were common to the three centers:

- The balance between formal and informal communication in parent involvement: All staff used both forms of communication, but to different extents. (The most common formal channels were parent conferences, parent meetings, and message books; the most common informal channel was conversation before and after sessions.)
- The balance between verbal and written communication in parent involvement: Staff used both, but to different extents.

Stage 2 Findings:
Latent Themes in Staff Understandings and Practices of Parent Involvement

Two latent themes were common to the three centers:

- Staff preferred informal communication with parents.
- Staff preference for informal communication was linked to their sense that parent involvement was essential but highly complex and problematic.

Stage 3 Findings:
Interpretive Case Studies of Good Parent Involvement

The results of stages 1 and 2 were collated into four interpretive case studies of good parent involvement as staff defined it. From each case study, the authors generated analytical questions (as discussed above) to suggest new perspectives on parent involvement.

Case Study 1: "Disclosing the Personal"

In each of the three groups, some staff understood parent involvement to mean parents disclosing personal information to them. For example:

> **2-8: (p10)**[1] I think this year…lots of parents are really open and willing to talk in detail, they're comfortable enough to come in and sit down and chat about the children, and I find that…it helps me and my job and, yeah, makes life easier if I have an understanding of what's going on at home with the children, and can help the children during the day with me….

Many staff shared 2-8's views, feeling that they could not really understand a child unless parents disclosed personal information about that child. However, eliciting such personal information can pose ethical problems:

> **1-6: (p5)** I guess it's a bit of a trust thing, too, where we're trusting them and they're trusting us as well, so that may be part of the building up of a relationship with us all too, just forming that element of trust, too. The parents are writing very personal understandings and beliefs about who they are as well, and so I think there is a respect element of, you know, privacy, too.... And I guess by introducing it in terms of it's an ownership for them and it's an ownership for us and an ownership for their children, they take on board that it is ownership and that's where it stops I guess. So, you know, they can share what they want to share.

The following are analytical questions about equitable communication:

- Do staff have a right to personal information about a family, even if it might help them to work more effectively with a child?
- Can staff build a strong sense of a child without such personal information?
- Can staff and parents build shared meanings about children's best interests without such personal information?
- Do parents withhold personal information from staff because they believe that staff can understand their child sufficiently without it?
- Do parents necessarily share staff beliefs on what they need to know about a child?
- Are meaningful relationships between anybody possible without sharing personal understandings and beliefs?

Case Study 2: "Understanding the Professional"

Some staff believed good parent involvement to mean parents understanding and respecting professionals' expert knowledge of the child. They felt that effective work with a child depended on parents understanding (automatically or after being told by staff) that staff decisions were based on their formal, professional knowledge about children. For example:

> **2-11: (pp3/4)** You need to get across to the parents that what we do with the kids is based on observations and, you know, it's not just we're playing with them every day.... Jenny had a group of parents that we did a round-table discussion with, and there had been a few concerns and it was really interesting to see the light dawning on their faces—that, "Oh my God, they are doing things that are based on, you know, relevant observation." ...Once, you know, they were explained to what the aims and objectives were and why things were happening as they were, it was good....

> **2-8: (p4)** Every now and then they will say, "Oh well, you know, what have you been doing?" but we...also put that on our newsletters, like what the program is about and stuff....

However, "putting it in writing" doesn't guarantee shared understanding:

> **3-14: (p25)** I don't think something written is ever effective, as effective as actually communicating verbally with parents. People can interpret something that is written, at least every one of us could read the same thing and get something totally different out of it. I think you really need to talk it out to be clear about it.

Several staff in Center 2 talked at length about the difficulties of creating shared understandings about children with their parents. They were uncertain whether parents understood the professional basis of their actions and, indeed, whether such understanding is possible. Do parents see staff explanations as excuses for poor practice? For example:

> **2-8: (pp7/8)** I think sometimes we kind of, we feel self-conscious in the presence of parents for too long, so we can give the impression that we don't want them around, even though we know we ought to want them around, and sometimes we actually kind of enjoy having them around.... There should be nothing to hide, but you would just be...very self-conscious, and I don't think you'd do your job as well as you normally.... Isn't it partly that we're...not confident the parents will read the situation like we do?.... If they're reading into crying [that] he might be just spitting the dummy[2] and they do that five times a day and we know that they need to actually get it out, but the parent in there might think, "Oh my goodness, they're just leaving him there to cry!"
>
> **2-9: (p8)** Yeah, that's when I find it hard, when parents are hanging around....
>
> **2-10: (p8)** You then have to explain why you are doing everything.
>
> **2-8: (p8)** Yeah, I usually do, if they're there I usually will say, "Oh, if he does that, that's the thing he does." ...While you're there you just explain to them, because they do look *uncomfortable*....
>
> **2-9: (p8)** It makes sense to them though if you explain to them.... [pause] ...Sometimes.

The following are analytical questions about equitable communication:

- Imparting professional knowledge to parents might help them to understand staff practices, but can it guarantee that parents will agree with them?
- Can staff work effectively if parents don't understand the basis of their actions with the children?
- Can staff guarantee that parents will understand their explanations of their actions?
- Will parents' discomfort with staff practices disappear merely because staff explain that those practices have sound professional foundations?

Case Study 3: "Revealing Ignorance"

Staff in Center 1 believed that it is valuable for staff and parents to exchange their uncertainties about children as well as their knowledge about them, and that they could build shared understandings of the child with parents by admitting their ignorance as much as their expertise. For example:

> **1-6: (p12)** I guess by letting parents know that you are not sure about everything that there is about their culture, well we've learnt more into their culture and we have learnt more of her values and her understandings, and she has learnt that we are prepared to also get in there and take an interest in what they do.

Another staff member explained how this approach allowed parents' voices to be heard:

> **1-4: (pp20/21)** When we open up spaces for parents to really have an input...[it] helps me be a better early childhood professional or a better person, because it makes me question my practices and question...the way I operate.... And I think that that helps the program of the service grow because it creates more equitable spaces for people, and the fringe-dwellers are the people that are silenced; they seem to get a bit more of a voice, sometimes.... I can't speak for the parents, but I think that some parents, they see that they can trust the service more because their ideas and beliefs and understandings are seen as valid, and important. They're not...[seen as]...overreacting with things or insecure about something, or don't have the appropriate knowledge. I think some of the parents are starting to feel like what they have to say is important.

However, admitting ignorance implies relinquishing one's status as an expert who always knows what's best for parents and their children. As 1-4 explained:

> **1-4: (p21)** I think parents seem to be more comfortable that we are going to talk about what we see as being true, and tackle issues that may or may not be difficult to talk about. Like at the moment in our room, there is a lot of aggression happening, and from that, I think parents are also not seeing us as all professionals who know it all, who they've got to compete with. I think they're opening up and feeling more comfortable about saying, "Well, we don't know what to do with it." And...[I feel]...more comfortable saying, "Well, I really don't know what the answer is," you know, and "Have you got any strategies?" ...I think it makes for a more honest relationship.... It's also problematic...[because if we]...really are talking about parents really having a true voice, then it means that we have to start sharing some power and start questioning our own practice and our own identity.

To create real dialogue with parents, staff needed to know what to do if they disagreed with parents about a key issue. A long discussion about this topic concluded thus:

> **1-4: (p28)** There is no answer. There are many possibilities.
>
> **1-7: (p28)** I think, though, that there's got to be a bottom line at some stage.
>
> **1-4: (p28)** But you take it, this is my summary, there'll be a bottom line at some stage, but you take everyone's ideas on board, try and understand where the parents are coming from with their beliefs and work with them on that. I'd imagine you try not to force the issue, but if you had to, then there would be a stand made. I think there'd be ongoing discussions about it, even once the policy was set, that there'd be ongoing dialogue with families to discuss it further.

For these staff, building shared understandings about the child required new ways to work that showed parents that their views were valued. Staff felt uncertain how to resolve differences of approach with parents if it meant relinquishing their status as experts.

The following are analytical questions about equitable communication:

- Does staff revealing their ignorance and encouraging parents' voices to be heard guarantee shared understandings?
- Indeed, are shared understandings of the child possible at all?
- What should staff do if they can't build shared understandings of the child?

Case Study 4: "Joining in—the Benefits and Costs"

Staff from Centers 1 and 3 believed strongly that parent involvement benefited children, staff, and parents, and that "good" parent involvement means parents "joining in" by offering the center, for example, cultural resources, technical expertise, and time. The benefits included extra resources—"an extra pair of hands," a possible advocate for the program with other parents, and a sense that the parents cared what staff did. The costs derived from "difficult" parents who disagreed with staff views (e.g., about discipline) or who behaved extremely emotionally.

Two staff from Center 3 believed that "joining in" demonstrates good staff-parent relationships based on shared understandings:

> **3-14: (p20)** [Parents joining in is] a wonderful support to staff.
>
> **3-13: (p20)** It makes your job so much easier.
>
> **3-14: (p20)** Well, it makes you feel good. They care enough to come in and be involved and supportive. A lot of parents will do things, take things away, like we put a sign up, you know, we need some new dolls clothes, or dress-ups or something, and "Oh, I can sew. What would you

> like?" And they get really affirmed by the fact that we're thrilled, and the children are using them, and we love it, because it's something that we just don't have time to do ourselves.
>
> **3-13: (p20)** An extra pair of hands in the room.

However, they also said that when parents "join in," they can challenge staff practices and undermine any shared understanding about children. For example, 3-14 said that there is always a possibility that parents will discipline children inappropriately:

> **3-14: (p21)** One of the problems I've had is parents coming in who have very strong personal philosophies about a particular issue. And when they're involved in the program with the children, a child may swear, a child may hit another child over the head with a block, parents react very differently.... If a child hits another child over the head with a block, we would step in and say, "That's a block. What do you use that for? To build with. That's right. Look at so and so. That really hurt. You need to build with the blocks." The parent will say, "Don't you hit him on the head with that. That's naughty." [Laughter]

Staff from Center 3 discussed times when parents who "joined in" had reacted emotionally to events that they disliked. They concluded:

> **3-14: (p22)** It is better not to encourage, sometimes, some parents. That doesn't mean the opportunity is not there and if they avail themselves of it we won't support it wholeheartedly, but it might be that there are some parents that we would be overly, I wouldn't be assaulting them, assaulting is not the right word there. [laughter] ... I wouldn't be encouraging them...as strongly as I would some other parents....
>
> **3-15: (p22)** Yes.
>
> **3-14: (p22)** ...who I can see have a beautiful gift to share with the children.
>
> **3-15: (p22)** That about covers it.

These weren't the only staff to recognize that they accepted parent involvement that didn't threaten their practices and self-image as a professional. A staff member from Center 1 was especially perceptive:

> **1-1: (p3)** We've been trying to reflect on how we communicate with parents, and some of the questions that we have been looking at as a group have been...how we position parents and how our relationships with parents may reflect our relationships with children; and why we communicate in particular ways with some parents and not communicate with parents in other ways.... We collaborate if they fit within our framework, and when they step out of that, it becomes really difficult.

The following are analytical questions about equitable communication:

- Can parents "join in" on equal terms with staff when their philosophies of child management differ from those of the staff?
- How can and should staff respond when they believe that parents' actions in the classroom are inappropriate?

Implications of the Research Findings

Much of the research literature (and the QIAS requirements) implies that better formal communication (e.g., documents, formal meetings) will improve staff-parent relationships and staff accountability. The results of this study, while preliminary and provisional, show that such a "technical" solution is unlikely to succeed, because it ignores the competition between social groups (including early childhood staff and parents) to get their knowledge accepted as truth—the politics of knowledge (Foucault, 1980). In three of the case studies, different kinds of knowledge competed for the status of "truth":

- Case study 1. Staff's professional need to know versus parents' right to privacy: Should parents have to disclose personal information "in the interests of the child," and should staff expect it? Who benefits from this disclosure? Does such disclosure qualify as equitable communication that helps to build shared meanings of the child?
- Case study 2. Staff's professional knowledge versus parents' knowledge: Should staff who explain to parents the professional knowledge informing their practices assume that parents will accept them? Who benefits from parents' acceptance, and does their acceptance qualify as an equitable communication that helps to build shared meanings of the child?
- Case study 4. Staff's professional practices versus parents' practices: Should parents be allowed to join in a center's activities only when they act in accordance with the center's philosophy? Who benefits from such selective permission for parents to join in, and does this approach qualify as equitable communication that helps to build shared meanings of the child?

The questions associated with each case study express the "local" politics of knowledge underlying parent involvement programs. They also express the broader politics of knowledge underlying early childhood education's attempts to privilege professional knowledge over parental knowledge (see Bridge, 2001). Those broader politics encourage staff to regard substantive parent involvement (as distinct from peripheral involvement such as "working bees," fund-raising, helping staff, and producing and/or distributing the center's newsletter) as direct challenges to their status as professionals and experts. This is because substantive parent involvement implies that parents' knowledge of their child is at least as valuable as professionals' knowledge. Consequently, substantive parent involvement is unlikely to emerge from "better staff-parent communication," especially if this communication emphasizes formal channels. Staff consistently preferred informal, verbal communication, because it allows them to negotiate shared meanings and understandings with parents about who their child is and how the child should be treated. Thus, substantive parent involvement requires centers to address the "local" politics of knowledge underlying staff-parent communication by giving parents a real voice without directly threatening staff's professional identity and expertise.

Models of how to approach this work could come from the history within Head Start programs of sharing power with parents as decision makers, policy makers, and teachers (Rinehardt, 2000; Ellsworth & Ames, 1998). We suggest that substantive parent involvement also means building an "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980) based on shared and equitable understandings of the child. Building such a community needs sufficient time for meaningful, face-to-face communication between staff and parents, and it needs ways to negotiate differences that work equally well for both sides and eschew exclusive claims to "truth." Case study 3 showed staff beginning to address these issues by considering whether and how best to reveal their uncertainties and the limits to their knowledge to parents. Would this approach necessarily give new voice to parents? Does it qualify as equitable communication that helps to build shared meanings of the child? Who benefits when professionals admit their uncertainties?

Staff and parents need time to explore these questions, and this need presents challenges for policy makers and staff alike. First, not all parents can and wish to spend their time being involved (see Driebe & Cochran, 1996). Second, when staff and parents are from different cultural and racial groups, stereotypes and cultural assumptions can undermine equitable communication and shared understandings of the child (Swadener, 2000). To help meet these challenges, future research could assess the extent to which this exploratory study's findings are relevant to the rest of the Australian early childhood field. If they are, then there is an urgent need for research into how best to turn staff members' ambivalence towards parent involvement into enthusiasm for it. Such research could assess strategies such as sharing life stories, discussing diversity, and critically reflecting—strategies that have been used to create alliances between staff and parents in Head Start programs (Chang, Muckelroy, Pulido-Tobiassen, & Dowell, 2000) and in Australian early childhood programs (Smith, 2001). This small, exploratory study indicates that identifying knowledge-power relationships between staff and parents and tracking their operation can significantly increase our understanding of the problematics of parent involvement consistently identified in the professional and research literature. Future research could explore how best to create staff-parent alliances that challenge inequitable knowledge-power relationships between staff and parents, creating high-quality programs with high-quality outcomes that benefit staff, parents, and children.

Notes

1. The notation refers to staff member 8 in Center 2, followed by page numbers in the interview transcript.

2. "Spitting the dummy" is an Australian colloquialism for "losing your temper."

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Purposeful Learning: A Study of Water

Becky Dixon
Clear Creek Elementary School, Bloomington, Indiana

Abstract

This article describes a project on water undertaken by kindergartners. The article first lists criteria that help determine the merit of a topic for study. A discussion of how the water project emerged follows. Preliminary work by the teachers, the formation of groups to explore specific aspects of water, and the results of each group's work are then discussed. The role of the teacher in providing teacher-directed activities to complement project work is presented. The article also examines how the activities undertaken during a project meet state and local standards.

Introduction

My teaching style has been greatly influenced by the work of Lilian Katz, Sylvia Chard, and the Reggio Emilia approach to early education. In my classroom of kindergartners, I have seen evidence that learning and growth in all areas have been greatly enhanced through the process of study or project work. Integrating curriculum learning around a study not only helps children make strong and relevant connections to real-life inquiries, it also builds a sense of community, democracy, and empowerment for the group and for each individual child who plays a role in the process. My role as facilitator is to guide the process; to assist in developing the study; to gather resources, including planning trips or arranging for guest speakers; and to reflect on and assess the development of the project and the children's experiences.

As a teacher in a public school setting, I am well aware of my responsibility to incorporate meeting district and state standards into children's experiences. I do feel it is my responsibility as the classroom teacher to provide ample opportunities for the children in my class to experience purposeful activities that will further growth and development in every area. My goal is to weave the learning of these proficiencies into the tapestry of naturalistic early childhood explorations. The focus of our learning goes far beyond learning a set of proficiencies. For me, the main criteria for determining the merit of a study are whether a topic provides:

- opportunities to pursue real inquiries
- opportunities for teamwork and community building
- opportunities for individual strengths to shine
- opportunities to showcase learning as a journey of exciting discovery and exploration
- opportunities for incorporating the learning of knowledge and skills relevant to development across ALL content areas

These criteria will be examined in more detail as we take a closer look at our study of water.

Emerging Project

Clear Creek Elementary School houses approximately 550 children. Bloomington is home to Indiana University's main campus. Our school is located on the southern outskirts of the city, bringing together a broad mix of families—some affiliated with the university and others residing in rural areas. We usually have four sections of half-day kindergarten divided between two teachers. At the time of this project, my kindergarten classes were composed of 18 children in the morning and 16 in the afternoon. I had a full-day student-teacher for eight weeks of our project from January until March. An aide also accompanied a special needs child in my afternoon class each day. Our teaching team also included our wonderful parent volunteers and other university practicum students.

Our study of water began in December. We had completed a lengthy project on the Olympics during September and October. In November, I initiated a study on "The Sky"—one of our adopted science series units. I wondered if kindergartners could grasp the abstract nature of things so distant, but I hoped that at some level they could connect with the theme. After all, it is a part of their visual world. They certainly relate to night and day, and they have had interest in clouds, storms, and the moon and sun. We had been enjoying reading popular American tall tales and folklore. From this point, we started reading some Native American tales about the stars and the characters and stories they represented to these storytellers. We created punched-hole constellation pictures on paper and made constellations in a box and on our Lite Brite. We looked through telescopes and enjoyed seeing things far away. A few children connected with our activities, and their work lingered. For others, the project lost steam quickly. Perhaps my own interest and energy waned. We were saved by a cold and snowy week in December.

Our "Sky" project seemed barely off the ground when a big winter snow arrived two weeks before winter vacation. Our attention immediately shifted from stars to snow. We brought some snow inside and played in it and watched it melt. We mixed colors into it and took its temperature. When it snowed more, we looked at the crystals on black paper. We had many enthusiastic questions about the snow and the water that came after the melt. Where did the snow come from? Where did it go when it melted? Why did the sun melt the snow faster? How did the sidewalk get dry if snow cannot melt into the sidewalk? These were just a few of many questions. As I went through the criteria, I felt that studying water had merit for these young children. It held the most important elements—interest, enthusiasm, and relevance. It also provided many opportunities for experiential learning across curricular areas.

Preliminary Work

When my student teacher, Jean Salamon, arrived in January, following winter break, we really plunged into our study. We did much preliminary work, organizing groups or "committees" that would fit our main themes, which centered on the children's questions. We gathered many resources, including books (fact and fiction), pictures of water, tapes of the sounds of water, and videotapes of bodies of water and weather-related water. We brainstormed our own list of possible activities involving learning in main areas such as language, math, and science, as well as incorporating motor/movement, artistic expression, and music. We talked about how we would work on a study as a community, as a whole group, and in small groups. We talked about the logistics and scheduling of study work as it would fit into our day. Jean and I felt that this type of preliminary work was critical to the success of our study. Forming our study groups started us off on our project web. The children's questions about water seemed to form four distinct groups, and four groups, or "committees," seemed to work well logistically. The "committee" names were (1) Where does water come from? (2) Where does water go? (3) What can water do? (4) How does water support life? The latter question evolved because of prior interest in water creatures—an earlier untapped interest. The children picked the committee that interested them most as we gave examples of the possible activities involved. We started our web about water with water in the center and our four group questions in array. Our study was underway.

Committee Work Begins

Our committees were eager to get started. Each day at our whole group opening meeting, we would reflect on our progress and discuss the plans for the day related to our project work. The adults usually met with two committees a day during our "choice" time. This strategy seemed to work best for us. Meetings lasted initially 15-20 minutes, allowing plenty of personal choice time for the children. The children decided that personal choice time was important to everyone. Our project work was conducted mostly in the form of small group meetings, while others were involved in personal choices. Some days, especially toward the beginning and end of the project, whole group activities related to the study were planned.

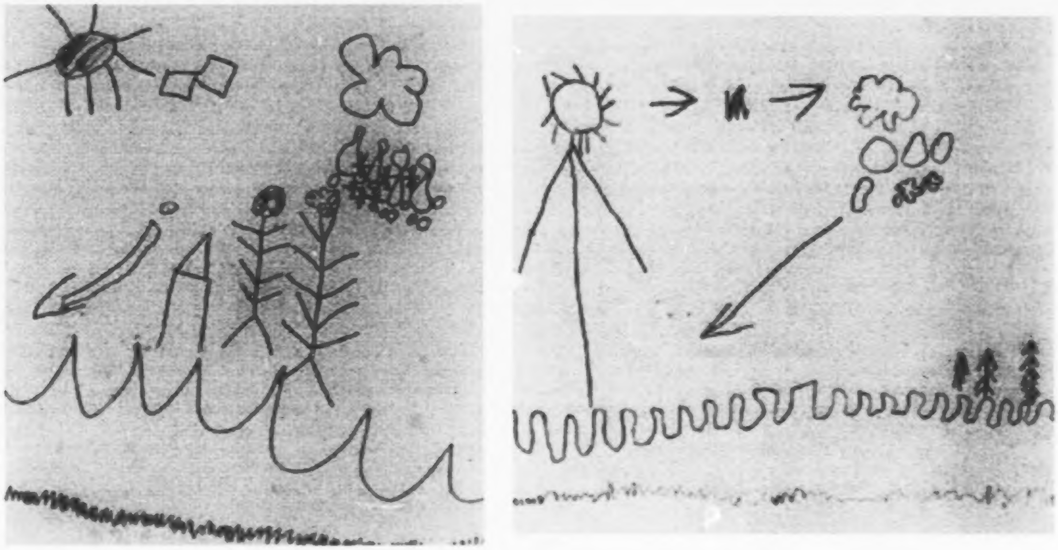
As the project web began to take shape and we had some direction, each group went to the library to find resources. Each of the four committees met with an adult to brainstorm ideas for possible activities, to make resource lists, and to draw plans as necessary. Documentation of the project by teachers and by children was an important part of the process. We kept copies of our notes, lists, and plans in committee folders throughout the study, which later became part of our document board and our final project book. Each committee had a different focus and consequently decided on widely varying activities, experiments, and so forth that would help the class learn and find answers to our questions about water. Each committee's charge was to research water as it related to its study question, experiment with various activities that demonstrated the learned principles, then implement activities with the rest of the class to teach others those principles. Some committees selected one main activity; others chose several activities that were appropriate for their topic. Documenting the children's work as they went through these steps was an important part of the process. Documentation took the form of drawings, diagrams, writings, photographs, and models, and was implemented mostly by children with adult support.

The water web.

The Work of Four Committees

Committee 1. Where Does Water Come from?

This group addressed the question we had about the snow falling from the sky. The class wanted to understand more about precipitation. The adults found some great resource books written for young children on projects and experiments on the topic of water. We marked the pages on evaporation and the water cycle for the committee. The children decided on one evaporation experiment with an activity called "rain in a bag." Over the course of the week, they made their own prototypes of the rain activity to test. The committee members introduced and set up the evaporation experiment for the whole class. During week 3, they set up a center during choice time for everyone to come and make their own rain in a bag. The children and adults took pictures to document the work of the committee and the class. During whole group meetings, the committees explained their discoveries, their progress, and how they wanted the whole class to be involved.



The children documented what they learned about the water cycle.

Committee 1 set up a rain-in-a-bag activity.

Committee 2. Where Does Water Go?

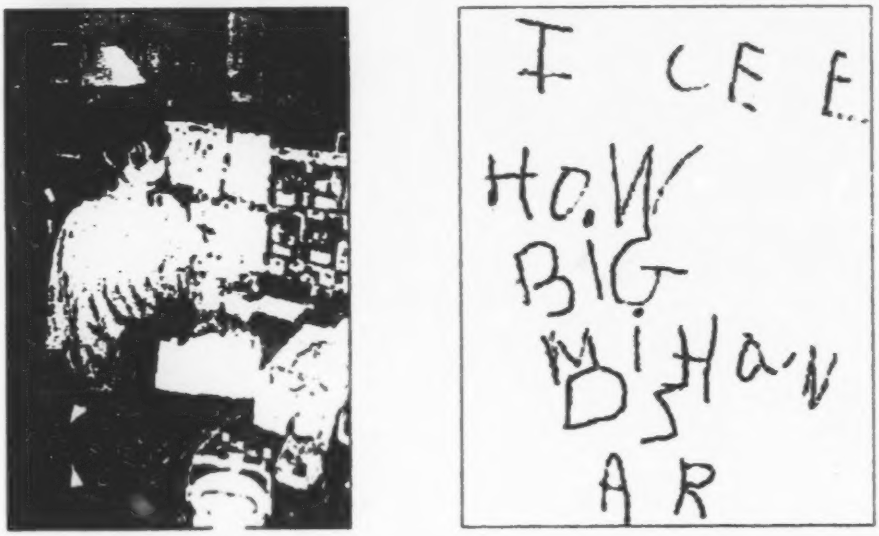
The children were intrigued as we watched an old classic film about a boy who made a little wooden canoe and set it afloat atop a mountainside, hoping that it would travel safely all the way to the sea. The children drew in their journals as they watched the film, noting things and obstacles encountered by the boat along the path and mapping the journey as it went from small stream to river to lake and finally to the sea. We took a walk along a creekbed on our school grounds. The children sat on the bridge to draw pictures of the creekbed and the things along the banks. The committee decided they wanted to make a large model of a riverbed to demonstrate the journey a boat might take from a mountaintop to the sea. They made initial plans (maps) on paper. They used clay, Playdough, and Model Magic to construct a mountain and riverbed in our sandbox. A plastic tray became the large body of water at the end of the journey. The children examined pictures and books and used their own knowledge of water areas to add props such as sand, shells, and trees. They also wanted to construct a bridge across the narrow river, which suited the engineering enthusiasts. Finally, they made a little clay boat to bravely embark on the journey from mountain to sea. They had invited others to assist in the construction along the way. The culmination was the launching of the boat by the whole class. Modifications over the course of a week were needed to enhance a smoother journey for the boat!

Committee 2 decided to make a model of a riverbed to demonstrate the journey a boat might take from a mountaintop to the sea.

The children planned their model on paper and used clay to make the mountain and a plastic tray for the water feature.

Committee 3. What Can Water Do?

This topic was broad! Adult help was necessary to guide the direction of the work of this group. The children were looking for answers to questions involving changing states of water and water's effect on other things. As we looked at our resource books, the children also became interested in how water can change the way things look or sound. We wanted them to explore other properties of water as well—for example, water has weight, water can change its form, water takes up space. The committee picked several activities/experiments to set up for the class. As with all the committees, we experimented as a group before introducing an activity to the whole class. The group conducted sink-and-float exploration in the water table. We examined various materials that would make a good boat and then tested them out. They made a magnifying lens with water and set up a refraction tank in the science area. At the water table, they set up metal pipes to bang on and experiment with water and sounds. They also set up musical water jars. During the last week of the project, this committee implemented an experiment demonstrating water and force. The committee demonstrated to the whole class an experiment looking at mixing of substances in water. This experiment, called "water volcano," mixed hot, colored water in a bottle submerged with an open lid in a tank of cold water. The children drew in their journals as they watched. They also demonstrated the dissolving of salt and other substances in water. This group never tired of its work, and the rest of the class was eager to visit their interactive and exciting exhibits!



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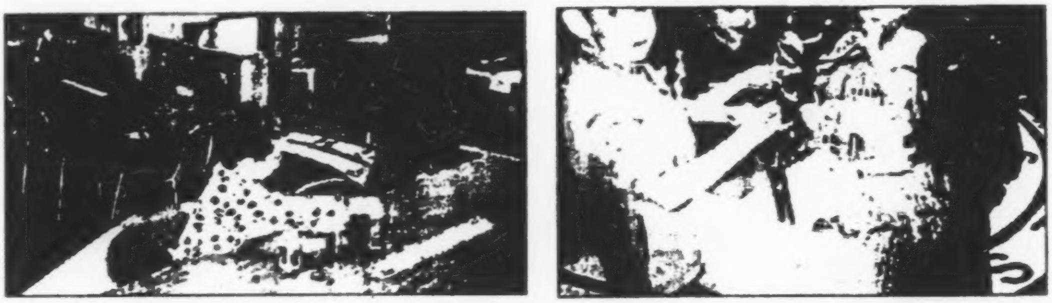
Committee 3 made a magnifying lens with water and set up a refraction tank in the science area.



The children set up musical water jars and metal pipes to bang on and experiment with water and sounds.

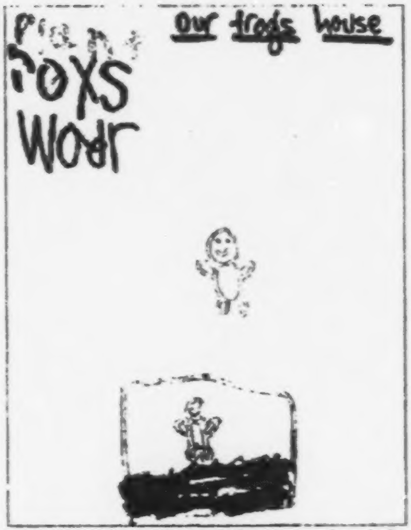
The children also demonstrated water and force.

While listening to taped sounds of moving water, children documented how they could use each of their senses while exploring water.

Committee 4. How Does Water Support Life?

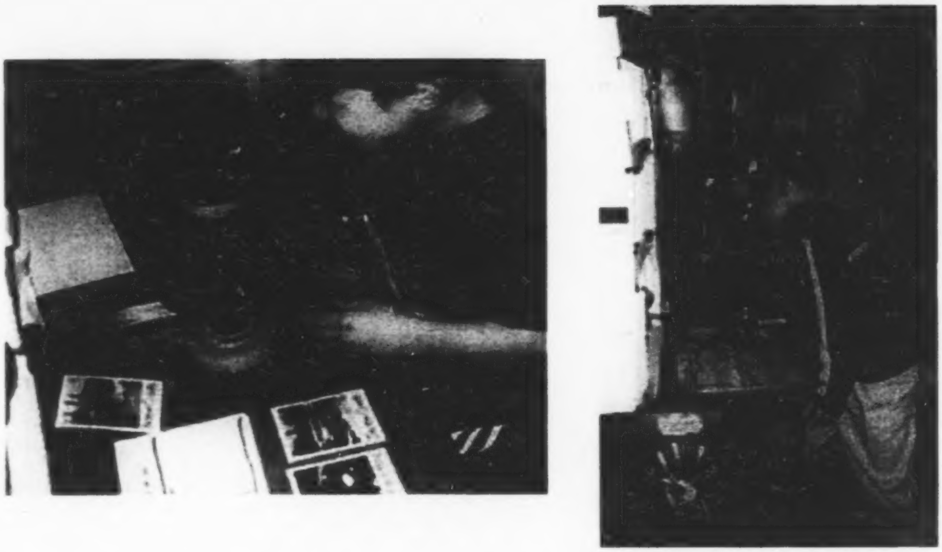
This committee attracted our nature lovers. They wanted new classroom pets! The children looked through books on water creatures and pooled their knowledge about living things that we could have in the classroom. In retrospect, a visit to a pet store, or a visit from a pet store worker, would have been of benefit. Through their reading, the children learned that some creatures, such as turtles, could carry diseases and would not be appropriate for the classroom.

Lists were made of possible creatures, and the children settled on two—a crayfish and a frog. These creatures were purchased, and the children worked on their habitats and continued their care. They shared their knowledge with the others about the dependence of the animals on water and other particulars. As part of their work, they also collected water from various sites, our creatures' habitats, a local creek, and a backyard pond.



A member of Committee 4 drew our frog's house.

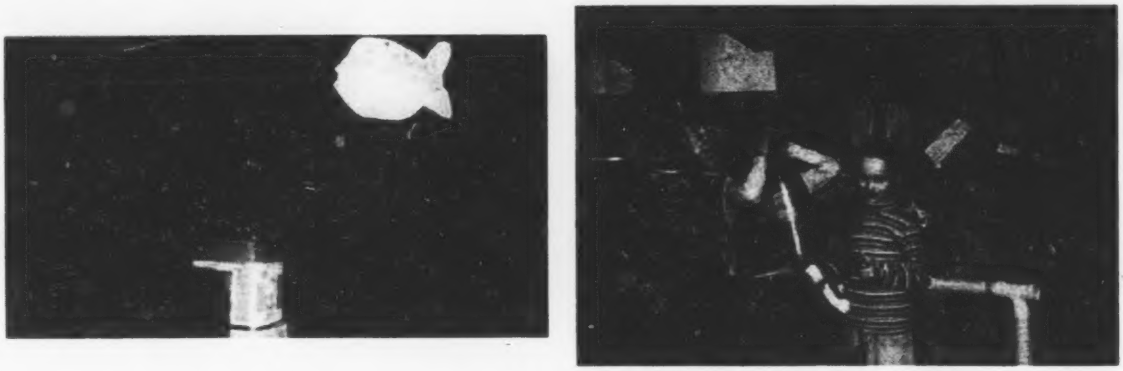
Committee members set up a learning activity and invited others to look at drops of water under microscopes to search for substances—living or nonliving. My student teacher and I also wanted to link water with human life. We extended the focus beyond the group's interest by showing a science video on water usage and conservation. The children were amazed to see a visual demonstration of how much water one person uses in a day—over 100 gallons! Through a whole group discussion, the children decided they wanted to see if they could collect 100 gallon milk jugs, as seen on the video, to see how much this amount really was. As the children brought in milk jugs from home, I strung them along the ceiling in our room, marking groups of 10. They were also intrigued with how water gets from bodies of water to our homes. We looked at Magic School Bus at the Water Works and used our big box of PVC pipe and boxes to bring water to our "homes." A trip to our city water plant or a visit from a plumber would also have been of benefit.



The children used microscopes to look for living and nonliving substances in the pond water.

An Interest Group: Our Water World

Meanwhile . . . our class project web took a new direction. There are many children in the class who thrive on daily dramatic play and large motor movement. A small group of children decided to turn our house area into a water world. Those interested made a list of what was to be included. We had read great books about different kinds of boats, and one student had just returned from a cruise. He brought in brochures and pictures from his trip. Some parents who had been on boating trips also brought in artifacts. The teachers contributed four large boxes, an anchor, life jackets, and an underwater scene shower curtain for the floor; the children created the rest. In the art area, our artists made water creatures and stars, which hung from our sky above on netting. They made portholes in our boats and made fishing poles to catch our dinner. They made scenery murals and posters and pictures of tropical islands. They used yarn spools to make spy glasses as they shouted "Land-Ho!" They sang pirate songs and played music from The Little Mermaid and other water-related tunes as they created and played. Along with our cruise brochures, the teachers added books about travel and exploration, past and present. Real compasses and maps were added with which children could track their journeys and record their travels. The stars also assisted our navigations. The plumbing pipes were incorporated so there could be running water and flushing toilets on the boats! Children made paper treasure boxes, with handmade jewelry, which they hid with delight. Several boys then made treasure maps at the writing table with clues as to where you might find the treasure in the water world!



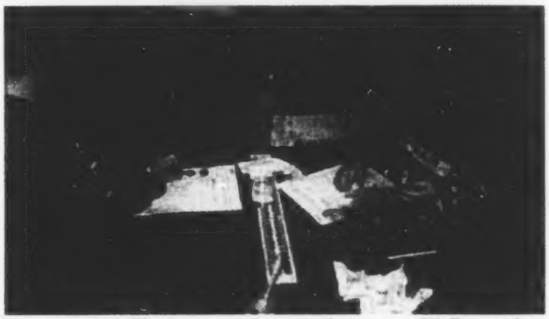
A group of children turned our house area into a water world: "Land-ho!"

Water world props included a box of shells,
a treasure box with jewels, a compass,
and maps to chart our course.

Teacher Roles and Filling in Holes

Although teacher guidance was present throughout the study, visitors were amazed at the confidence children had in managing their own work. The work certainly was owned by the children. For teachers, there is great satisfaction in seeing children leading learning and gaining confidence in their abilities as learners and as contributors to a community of learners. The children conducted themselves responsibly and learned a host of management skills associated with planning, implementing, and assessing a big project. The balance of roles is a critical element for me in a classroom where we respect each other's strengths and individuality and we support each other as needed. Children need the opportunity to work in their areas of strength, which allows them to showcase their competence, while being encouraged and challenged to work in their areas of need.

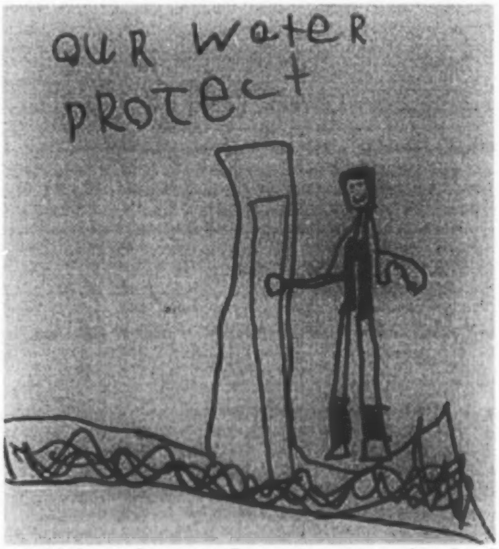
My student teacher and I did fill in some holes throughout the project with teacher-planned activities to help children make further connections in their learning and to incorporate skills or learning opportunities that did not seem to surface for the group or for individuals who were "on the fringe" of participation. For example, we felt that the class needed more experience with understanding the math concept of comparing the number of objects in two groups (how many more or less?). We planned a thematically related math activity called Feed the Hungry Fish as a learning center activity to meet this need. Each child was invited to participate in small groups, with an adult, until everyone had a turn and their understanding of the concept was recorded. At times, meeting a need was as simple as providing my support as a child tried on a new role, such as my asking a child to draw a diagram for a committee when drawing was not an area of confidence for a child. I do feel it is my responsibility to see that learning takes place for ALL children in whatever form and at whatever level is appropriate for that child. Careful observation and recording is the key to following the participation and experiences of each child, then to address those needs or fill in those holes. Doing projects is not an exception to that aspect of a teacher's role. Many children were using beginning reading and writing skills throughout the project. Some children were not. That was a hole for those children. Mathematics was not incorporated as much as we would have liked. That was a hole. I felt a need for more music and large motor activities. These holes were filled in through teacher-planned activities either during whole group, small group, or individual encounters. The activities may or may not have been associated with our water theme. As stated earlier, while recognizing the importance of connected, integrated learning activities, care was taken to balance our study focus time with our other regular classroom activity. Children's individual needs continued to be met whether woven into our project or through other classroom activity.



Teacher activity: How many drops of water will fit on the coin?

Bringing the Project to a Close

I am not sure when the project actually came to a close. The boxes were tattered and torn. Fewer visits were made to the water world. The committees stopped conducting activities. The model mountain was soggy and crumbling. Every few days, a committee enthusiast would mend a tear or patch a hole. Interest was waning. As the photos came back, we put them in a book. Our language arts practicum students helped the children reflect and write about their experiences, responding to questions such as, "What did you learn?" "What was your favorite committee activity?" "How did you use literacy, math, or science skills?" "How did you work with your peers?" A videotape was also made of our project, which due to technical problems with the camera was of very poor quality. The adults worked on a document board, which was reviewed by parents on family night and hung in our hallway for others to share in our learning journey. The contents of the document board, including photos, drawings, and our web, were later transferred to a project book, which could then be taken home by children to share with families. So much energy and enthusiasm went into our work. After the project, the children slipped into routines naturally. We took time to bask in the accomplishments and to enjoy the down time, returning to more time with old favorites in the classroom. After a big project, we wait and wonder what other encounters await us. Will a new season bring another interest to pursue? For a time, we are happy to wonder.



A child drew the cover for our water project book.

Linking: Projects and Standards

There is much emphasis these days on curricular standards. Even for the youngest children, the message is ever present. Are there general standards or developmental bottom lines for which children and teachers should be held accountable? I do not wish to engage in a discussion about the appropriateness of particular standards or of accountability issues associated with standards including standardized assessment (that would be another paper entirely!). The fact is that caregivers are responsible for developing the potential in each child through practices that are developmentally appropriate. They are responsible for keeping children safe and nurtured, and they are responsible for creating an environment where children have opportunities to test and stretch their capabilities in every arena. In my role as a public school teacher in the state of Indiana, I am obligated to assist children in reaching certain goals, as they are able. These goals include those I hold dear based on years of experience and personal research—self-worth, risk taking, problem solving, and cooperative living. They also include state and local standards, which come to me via a big red notebook. Some of these standards are very appropriate. Some are rigorous. A few may be inappropriate by my standards. In the following tables and sections, I will attempt to link the most important and appropriate standards (from my knowledge of best practices and from my little red book!) to the knowledge and skills experienced through our water study.

Table 1
Language Arts Standards and Project Experiences

Standards/Proficiencies	Project Experiences
Understand concepts about print (include letter recognition)	Reading, recording, writing, labeling throughout project
Phonemic awareness	Reading, recording, writing
Decoding/word recognition	Reading, recording, writing
Vocabulary/word meaning	Discussion, reading, resources, recording, labeling
Reading for information	Modeled reading, resource work
Identify structural features	Modeled reading—identified title, author Used table of contents to locate information
Use pictures/context/predictions to construct meaning	Reading—resource, factual, fiction, and beginning, predictable books related to topic
Connect text to experiences	Reading and sharing throughout project
Retell stories/text	Discussion/reflection throughout project
Identify/summarize main ideas	Whole group/committee discussions—lots of talking and sharing of ideas!
Fantasy/reality	Fiction vs. factual—resource materials
Variety of print materials	Incorporated songs, poems, rhymes related to water project
Identify character, setting, etc.	Book discussions, charts (We were also doing an author study of Ezra Jack Keats during this time.)
Identify favorite books	Graph of favorite Keats books
Infer characters' feelings	Chart of what we can tell about Keats and his characters
Writing Process	
Make a writing plan	Guidance in organizing/planning to write
Dictated writing	Some recorded writing by adults, web, charts
Writing/picture, letters, words for purpose	Writing/drawing in all aspects of project work for distinct purposes
Use various venues for writing for different purposes	Web, chart, diagrams, maps, designs, plans, lists, graphs, journal entries, class book, daily news, school news, parent news
Handwriting	Guided, purposeful writing
Spelling—using knowledge of sounds	Assisted writing/encouraging risk taking, writing/invented spellings
Listening/Speaking	
Active listening	Engaged in active, purposeful communication
Follow directions	Incorporated in all activities
Share ideas with others	Group/one-to-one discussions/committee work
Describe events in logical sequence	Discussions—giving directions to others
Recite poems, songs, rhymes	Group poems, chants, songs, rhymes
Study Skills	
Awareness of resources	Many resources gathered and used in project
Responsible management	Children managing is focus of project!
Follow a set plan	Learning to organize and follow through—being accountable to classmates is a focus

Table 2
Mathematics Standards and Project Experiences

Standards/Proficiencies	Project Experiences
Communicate problem solving through words/drawing	Diagrams of processes/experiments
Compare/contrast attributes	Compared states/properties of water, volume/containers, comparing water's effect on sound/vision
Discriminate patterns	Talked about patterns in tides/waves, patterns on fish, pattern of rain cycle, patterns of predictable actions
Symbolic representation	Graphing evaporation experiment Records, charts, web, models, drawings
Positional relationships	Language constructing water world, mapping, drawing plans, model building
Use variety of strategies to solve problems	Used manipulatives to measure snow Used best materials/resources to build model (and modified for optimal use) PVC pipe construction Choosing materials/designs for experiments
Whole Numbers	
Recognize/write numbers to 21	Measured/recorded snow depths (to 10) Measured and recorded temperatures of air, snow, water (0-45) Measured water level in evaporation jars over time
Compare more/less	Same as above. Feed the Hungry Fish game with dice and fish food (how many more/less)
Rote count to 100	100 gallon jugs/human water use Examined the lines on the thermometer Counted by tens to 100
Put objects in groups by tens, ones	Thermometer, Feed the Hungry Fish game 100 gallon jugs in groups of 10
Recognize equal parts	Snack time every day! Feed the Hungry Fish Little Blue & Little Yellow activity explored parts becoming whole/bigger
Use objects with simple addition and subtraction, small numbers	Feed the Hungry Fish game
Read/write symbols: +, -, =	Recording the Feed the Hungry Fish game
Use guess/check strategy	Feed the Hungry Fish game, water experiments Recorded prediction-outcome
Name/use/sort basic shapes	Art activities related to constructing water world and models
Build/create two- and three-dimensional shapes	Blocks, box boats, models, puffer fish
Spatial Sense	
Identify relative position	Boat/travel play, PVC construction

Nonstandard measure	Cubes and ruler to measure snow and water levels Comparative measuring in construction and PVC building
Time relativity	Calendar every day Tracked sun movement related to snow melting on the playground Season discussion related to weather
Compare objects by weight, length, volume, temperature	Water/container comparisons, evaporation experiment, snow measuring, taking temperature of air, water, snow
Identify coins	Teacher activity: How many drops of water will fit on the coin?

Table 3
Science Standards and Project Experiences

Standards/Proficiencies	Project Experiences
Seek knowledge/participate	Enticing, child-initiated, purposeful activities promoted participation and knowledge seeking
Know use for science tools	Used thermometer, microscope, telescope, magnifying lens, rulers, and balance scale
Teamwork in solving problems	Most activities, all committee work
Exploring systems	Water cycle, habitats
Models/simulations can be used to represent/understand real things	Water-in-a-bag activity, model, dramatic play in water world/boats/travel
Observe how things can change	Water-in-a-bag activity, evaporation, water volcano, water states, water and sounds/vision
Things are different/have different purposes/uses/attributes	Comparing/contrasting discussions/activities
Observe change through records and measurement	Already stated
Use graphs to show observations	Graphing evaporation over time
Estimate quantities	Feed the Hungry Fish game, snow measure
Classify objects by attributes	Classification game/activity
Make predictions	Already stated
Discuss reasons for ideas	Sharing, recording, journal entries
Difference between living/nonliving	Plants, aquatic life, water creatures and their habitats
Needs of living things	Care of water creatures/plants
Recycle	Daily! 100 gallon jugs. Children made lists of materials to acquire from the recycling center for projects.
People impact environment	Conservation activity, video, making dirty water, helping slow erosion
Recognize/name four seasons	Already stated

Describe kinds of weather	Already stated
Awareness of sun/moon/stars	Navigation/water world play, art work
Where food comes from	Not with this project (but we talked about what water creatures eat)
Tools, machines, inventions affect our lives	Books/pictures on exploration by water Tools of navigation, tools of science, plumbing!
Understand the human organism (health standards)	Movement activities, motor/body awareness, spatial activities (limited to these through this project)

Social Studies

Although our district does not have social studies standards, the social benefits of constructing an integrated study are obvious. Among the benefits are that children develop a sense of their role in the community. They develop confidence as they take charge of planning, implementing activities, and sharing knowledge with their peers. There are ample opportunities to encourage even the timid student to make worthwhile contributions to the group effort and then reap the rewards of that teamwork. Children learn to listen, share, and respond to each other through positive and productive negotiation and dialogue. Together they develop plans, set goals, and work towards that end. The rewards to the teacher of observing the immense satisfaction children show when cooperation leads to success cannot be measured. It is perhaps the biggest benefit of all. I have seen my children become more confident in their abilities, socially and academically, through such work, whether it is a large project such as this one, or a smaller, shorter inquiry with a small group of interested participants.

Health/Technology

My red notebook of district proficiencies also contains standards for health and technology, although not reviewed specifically here. Some of the health standards were certainly incorporated in our project. Many of the kindergarten health standards involve an understanding of self—who we are as living beings; how we function physically, cognitively, and emotionally; and how we relate to others in our environment. The close, cooperative work with others helped the children understand their capabilities and challenges and reflected their roles in a community activity. Caring for living creatures gave us insight into the needs of living things. Some of the technology standards were present as we explored computer programs related to water and used the computer as a resource to find answers to some of our questions. The children's writing was done by hand rather than word processing on the computer. Technology was an area that could have been integrated more into our project.

Music/Art/Motor Development

Although there are no standards for music, art, and motor development, these areas certainly carry as much weight in the early childhood classroom as any "academic" area. Music, art, and fine/gross motor experiences were purposely woven into elements of the entire project. These venues served to meet the needs of those who hold a gift and passion in those arenas, giving them a niche and opportunity to shine. They also were included in whole group activities to encourage those who would benefit from more practice and comfort in these areas.

Conclusion

In planning how I would relate our project activities to the standards, I had intended to focus only on the standards I felt were most critical to early development. However, as I was relating our activities from the project and other activities during the past months to each standard, I realized that all but a few of the complete standards were addressed by the work the children accomplished. This project was in fact most complete, encompassing every area of development and curriculum. Every child participated and contributed to the group effort in his or her own way. It is a personal goal of mine that, while implementing a project, each child has an opportunity to lead a group in an activity of strength and to gain more competence in an area of need. Part of my role as teacher is the challenging task of searching for holes that may occur for individual children. We tried to have every child participate in each of the activities, and I believe through my observations and personal documentation that my student teacher and I were fairly successful in meeting these goals. I am fortunate to have a team of adults comprising parents, university students, and special education staff in the classroom to assist in planning, implementing, and providing guidance for children. These informed adults provided the scaffolding and encouraged children to work at the edge of their potential in each of their endeavors. Records of each child's level of participation were made during some activities, but not during all. For me, assessment of children's experience and growth and of project success is an ongoing area for improvement.

In retrospect, I would also like to have included more "fieldwork" beyond our own school grounds. Field trips have been sharply discouraged of late, making it a difficult, but probably not an impossible, barrier to enhancing real, connected learning. Guest speakers would have also been of great benefit during this project. Next time!

Overall, the water project provided a multitude of enriching experiences appropriate for the kindergarten level. Every child was involved in his or her own way, and every child gained some knowledge, competence, and confidence. I am pleased that such an exciting adventure, lasting nearly a third of our school year, provided our kindergartners with the experiences that our school district, our state, and I thought to be important (and I have much higher expectations than minimum competency!). Watching the enthusiasm in the children day after day as they took the helm convinced me that the project was relevant and important for these children. It was indeed purposeful learning!

Author Information

Becky Dixon (M.S.Ed.) currently teaches kindergarten at Clear Creek Elementary School in Bloomington, Indiana. She previously worked for nearly a decade as a preschool teacher with the Indiana University Campus Children's Center. Becky works closely in teacher training with Indiana University early childhood education students. She conducts numerous lectures and workshops on a variety of topics including documenting the work of young children. She enjoys writing on education topics. Ms. Dixon was the 1999 recipient of the National Kindergarten/Early Childhood Professional Award given by Scholastic Inc., presented at the annual National Association for the Education of Young Children conference.

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Multicultural Education and Children's Picture Books: Selected Citations from the ERIC Database

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ERIC Documents

ED433394 UD033080
Title: **Art or Propaganda? Pedagogy and Politics in Illustrated African-American Children's Literature since the Harlem Renaissance.**
Author(s) Thompson, Audrey
Pages: 53
Publication Date: April 23, 1999
Notes: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
Available from: EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
Document Type: Information Analysis (070); Speeches/meeting papers (150)

This paper explores assumptions about children's political thinking as reflected in African American children's literature, with particular attention to picture books and illustrated magazine stories. Framed in terms of the "art or propaganda" distinction that the Harlem Renaissance philosopher Alain Locke used to clarify the role of art in social change, the paper discusses how African American children's literature since the Harlem Renaissance has taken up issues of race and racism. Many books have been intended to combat racism, but neither the artistic nor political merits of a book guarantee its success in an antiracist curriculum. One contribution that educational research can make is challenging the assumption by white teachers that a well-intentioned book will not be offensive to people of color. Research can help sensitize teachers to the issues they need to consider and it can provide a context for deciding the appropriateness of a particular book in the classroom. The example of the book "Nappy Hair" by Carolivia Herron shows that a book may be regarded very differently by different groups. (Contains 22 endnotes and 64 references.) (SLD)

Descriptors: Beliefs; *Black Literature; Black Stereotypes; *Blacks; Children; *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Awareness; Multicultural Education; Picture Books; *Politics; Racial Bias; *Racial Discrimination
Identifiers: *African Americans; Harlem Renaissance; *Locke (Alain Leroy)

ED420868 CS216387
Title: **Canadian Multicultural Picture Books.**
Author(s) Bainbridge, Joyce; Pantaleo, Sylvia; Ellis, Monica
Pages: 23
Publication Date: March 1998
Notes: Paper presented at the Annual Spring Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English (Albuquerque, NM, March 19-21, 1998).
Available from: EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: Information Analysis (070); Speeches/meeting papers (150)

Educators have a particular interest in multicultural education and the use of literature as an avenue for the exploration and celebration of diversity within Canada. There is a need to understand the interdependence of all people in a global culture and an urgent need for peace and understanding. Five works of children's literature "Very Last First Time" by J. Andrews, "Ghost Train" by P. Yee, "How Smudge Came" by N. Gregory, "Red Parka Mary" by P. Eyvindson, and "The Moccasin Goalie" by W. Brownridge) depict a wide range of minorities and issues of discrimination--age, gender, physical and mental disability, and ethnicity. Research has shown that storybook reading accompanied by discussion can significantly improve a child's acceptance of difference. With this in mind, it is up to individual teachers to select multicultural books for their classes, and allow time to discuss the issues that arise from them. The early years in preschool and in the elementary grades are important in developing attitudes and values that are compatible with current expectations and circumstances within Canadian society. Multicultural children's books can be used effectively as means for coming to understand individual human stories, and the universal emotions and themes they contain. Appended is a list of Canadian Multicultural Picture Books (fiction). contains 23 references. (RS)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; Diversity (Student); Elementary Education; Ethnicity; Foreign Countries; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; Reading Material Selection; Social Discrimination
Identifiers: *Canada; *Multicultural Literature

ED419248 CS216343
Title: **Gender Stereotypes in Children's Picture Books.**
Author(s) Narahara, May M.
Pages: 22
Publication Date: 1998
Notes: Exit Project EDEL 570, University of California, Long Beach.
Available from: EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Document Type: Reports--Research (143)

Research has examined how gender stereotypes and sexism in picture books affect the development of gender identity in young children, how children's books in the last decade have portrayed gender, and how researchers evaluate picture books for misrepresentations of gender. A review of the research indicated that gender development is a critical part of the earliest and most important learning experiences of a young child. Picture books provide role models for children in defining standards for feminine and masculine behavior; gender stereotypes and sexism limit children's potential growth and development; non-sexist books can produce positive changes in self-concept, attitudes, and behavior; and picture books in the last decade have shown some improvement in reducing stereotypes, but subtle stereotypes still exist. Recommendations include: teachers, parents, and care-givers need to be critical in evaluating books they plan to share with young children; teachers and parents need to become familiar with criteria for evaluating books; teachers need to be critical in selecting multicultural literature; more minorities, particularly authors of Mexican American and African American ethnicity, need to write fiction for young children that authenticate their heritage; universities need to train teachers to be aware of the use of male-dominated language and the positive benefits of using non-sexist books and classroom materials; and research on books published should continue. (Contains 21 references, appendixes contain a checklist for sexism in children's literature, and two tables and two figures of data. (RS)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; Elementary Education; Fiction; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; Reading Material Selection; Reading Research; *Sex Stereotypes; Sexism in Language; Teacher Role
Identifiers: *Gender Issues

ED413926 IR056758
Title: **Multicultural Diversity of Children's Picture Books: Robert Fulton Elementary School Library.**
Author(s) Mosely, Joyce J.
Pages: 37
Publication Date: July 1997
Notes: Master's Research Paper, Kent State University.
Available from: EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
Document Type: Dissertations/Theses (040); Reports--Evaluative (142)

The United States has a culturally diverse society. Since children are influenced by what they see and hear at a young age, the aim of this study was to determine if the picture book collection of the Robert Fulton Elementary School Library (Cleveland, Ohio) reflects the cultural diversity of its students. The secondary objective was to ensure that students have materials to learn about a diversity of cultures, and the ability to develop a sense of themselves in the books they read. A content analysis was conducted of 143 books in a sample of 201 picture books. Each book was analyzed for: ethnic representation of characters, central and incidental; ethnicity in terms of roles and gender; the importance of the family to the characters and the story; the authenticity and realism of the races portrayed; and whether children would be positively or negatively affected by the content of the book. The characters in the majority of the titles were realistic and little stereotyping was found. There is a need for more books on the cultures of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans in the collection of this library. If a school is predominantly African American, then the collection of the library should reflect that fact. Publishers need to make a greater effort to find multicultural authors and publish more multicultural books. (Contains 42 references.) (Author/SWC)

Descriptors: American Indians; Asian Americans; Blacks; Childrens Literature; Content

Analysis; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Education; Cultural Enrichment; *Cultural Pluralism; *Cultural Relevance; Elementary Education; Ethnic Groups; Family (Sociological Unit); Hispanic Americans; Library Collection Development; Library Material Selection; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; Racial Distribution; *School Libraries; Sex Role; User Needs (Information)
Identifiers: *Multicultural Literature; Multicultural Materials

ED412168 SO028520
Title: **Picture Books as a Social Studies Resource in the Elementary School Classroom.** ERIC Digest.
Author(s) Manifold, Marjorie Cohee
Author Affiliation: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Bloomington, IN.(BBB24392)
Pages: 4
Publication Date: March 1997
Sponsoring Agency: Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. (EDD00036)
Contract No: RR93002014
Report No: EDO-SO-97-4
Available from: EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
Availability: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408; phone: 812-855-3838, 800-266-3815.
Document Type: ERIC product (071); ERIC digests in full text (073)
Target Audience: Practitioners; Teachers

Picture books are useful tools for teaching many abstract and complex concepts of the social studies at the elementary level. They allow students to develop visual literacy through sustained viewing time necessary for exploration, critique, and reflection on the images portrayed. Numerous examples of picture books are presented to support such development. This digest is divided into eight sections: (1) Introduction; (2) "Images as Allegories"; (3) "Historic Photographers and Artists"; (4) "Illustrated Storyboard Narrative"; (5) "Illustrated Timelines"; (6) "Multicultural Education through Diverse Socio-Cultural Images"; (7) "Developing Social Empathy through Pictures"; and (8) "Focal Points of Lessons on Human Similarities and Differences." Contains six additional resources. (EH)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; Critical Thinking; Critical Viewing; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Curriculum; Global Education; Illustrations; Instructional Materials; Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; *Social Studies; *Visual Literacy; Visual Perception
Identifiers: ERIC Digests

ED420071 CS216364
Title: **The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers.**
Author(s) Muse, Daphne, Ed.
Pages: 704
Publication Date: 1997

ISBN: 1-56584-339-8
Available from: Document Not Available from EDRS.
Availability: The New Press, 450 West 41st Street, New York, NY 10036 ($60).
Document Type: Book (010); Guides--Non-classroom (055); Reference materials (130)

This comprehensive guide to multicultural children's literature features over 1,000 critical and detailed book reviews for pre-school, elementary, and middle school students. The reviews in the guide cover a vast range of picture books, biographies, poetry, anthologies, folktales, and young adult novels, and include synopses, suggestions for classroom use, and assessments of key elements such as cultural sensitivity of text and illustrations. The guide's reviews are organized using an innovative thematic approach designed to aid teachers and parents in integrating these works into existing reading lists and at home. The guide also contains essays by leading writers and educators on key issues in multicultural education, such as recent immigrant experiences, human rights, and building cross-cultural relationships, as well as classics like the Council on Interracial Books for Children's "10 Quick Ways To Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism." Also included are illustrations, timelines, sidebars, lesson plans, and vignettes showing how to incorporate multicultural books into the curriculum. Information on multimedia resources including films, videos, and CD-ROMS is provided. The guide contains an index of authors, illustrators, titles, and ethnicities. (NKA)

Descriptors: *Adolescent Literature; Biographies; Book Reviews; *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Context; Elementary Education; Fiction; *Literary Criticism; Literature Appreciation; Middle Schools; *Multicultural Education; Picture Books; Poetry; Preschool Education; Resource Materials; *Thematic Approach
Identifiers: Cultural Sensitivity; Folktales; *Multicultural Literature

ED415507 CS216145
Title: **Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K-8.** Second Edition, Covering Books Published from 1993-95. NCTE Bibliography Series.
Author(s) Barrera, Rosalinda B., Ed.; Thompson, Verlinda D., Ed.; Dressman, Mark, Ed.
Author Affiliation: National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL.(BBB05210)
Pages: 257
Publication Date: 1997
Notes: For the previous edition, see ED 375 424.
ISBN: 0-8141-2541-7
ISSN: 1051-4740
Available from: EDRS Price MF01/PC11 Plus Postage.
Availability: National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096 (Stock No. 25417-3050: $12.95 members, $16.95 nonmembers).
Document Type: Reference materials--Bibliographies (131)
Target Audience: Practitioners

This second edition bibliography, like its predecessor, offers educators and other interested readers a guide to some of the most compelling multicultural literature for elementary and middle school students. It includes annotations of almost 600 nonfiction and fiction texts published from 1993 to 1995 that focus on people of color, particularly African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos/Hispanic Americans, and Native

Americans. Most annotations identify the particular country, nationality, or ethnic group of the characters and setting. Chapters group books by genre or theme rather than by cultural group, however, to emphasize both cultural diversities and similarities. Nonfiction is divided into "People and Places, "Ceremonies and Celebrations," "Understanding the Past: History," "Social and Environmental Issues," "Concepts and Other Useful Information," and "The Arts." Fiction entries are divided primarily by age level, with books for the very young, picture books, fiction for intermediate readers, and novels for older readers. Other categories include "Individuals To Know: Biography and Autobiography," "Poetry, Verse, and Song," "Folktales, Myths, and Legends: Old and New," and "Anthologies." Also included are a detailed subject index; a list of resources pertaining to multicultural literature; a list of award-winning works of poetry, fiction, drama, and nonfiction for young readers given from 1993 to 1997; a guide to ordering books; and indexes of authors, illustrators, and titles. (RS)

Descriptors: *Adolescent Literature; Annotated Bibliographies; Anthologies; *Childrens Literature; Cultural Differences; Elementary Education; Ethnic Groups; *Fiction; Folk Culture; Foreign Countries; Junior High Schools; Middle Schools; Multicultural Education; *Nonfiction; Picture Books; Poetry
Identifiers: *Multicultural Literature; Multicultural Materials; *Trade Books

ED406681 CS215811
Title: **Building Bridges with Multicultural Picture Books for Children 3-5.**
Author(s) Beaty, Janice J.
Pages: 282
Publication Date: 1997
ISBN: 0-13-400102-8
Available from: Document Not Available from EDRS.
Availability: Merrill Prentice-Hall, Order Processing, P.O. Box 11071, Des Moines, IA 50336-1071 ($32).
Document Type: Book (010); Guides--Classroom--Teacher (052)
Target Audience: Practitioners; Teachers

Focusing on the common bonds of all children everywhere while honoring their differences, this book shows teachers how to choose appropriate picture books, how to lead children into book extension activities featuring multicultural characters, and how to develop an entire multicultural curriculum with these books. Each chapter in the book concludes with learning activities, references, additional reading, and (in most chapters) lists of children's books and software programs. Chapters in the book are (1) Discovering Common Bonds; (2) Choosing Appropriate Picture Books; (3) Developing Self-Esteem; (4) Relating to Family Members; (5) Getting Along with Other Children; (6) Engaging in Physical Expression; (7) Speaking Other Language; (8) Eating Fine Foods; (9) Creating Arts and Crafts; (10) Making Music and Dance; (11) Caring about the Earth; and (12) Creating a Multicultural Curriculum. An approximately 750-item topical children's book list is attached. (RS)

Descriptors: Art Activities; *Childrens Literature; Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; Curriculum Development; Diversity (Student); Early Childhood Education; Fine Arts; Interpersonal Relationship; *Multicultural Education; Physical Activities; *Picture Books; *Reading Material Selection; Second Languages; Self Esteem

Journal Articles

EJ607816 CS759331
Title: **Beyond Mulan: Rediscovering the Heroines of Chinese Folklore.**
Author(s) Li, Suzanne D.
Source: *New Advocate,* v13 n2 p143-55 Spr 2000
Publication Date: 2000
ISSN: 0895-1381
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Opinion papers (120); Reference materials--Bibliographies (131)

Notes how sadly the Disney treatment of the story of Mulan reduced both the character Mulan and the story's broad appeal. Presents and critiques four picture book versions of the Mulan legend. Discusses 16 picture books of original folklore based on authentic Chinese sources. Concludes with criteria for evaluating Chinese folklore in picture books. (SR)

Descriptors: *Adolescent Literature; *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Awareness; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Criteria; Folk Culture; Foreign Countries; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books
Identifiers: *China

EJ606392 CS759260
Title: **"Reading the Word and the World" within a Literature Curriculum.**
Author(s) Enciso, Patricia; Rogers, Theresa; Marshall, Elizabeth; Jenkins, Christine; Brown, Jacqueline; Core, Elizabeth; Cordova, Carmen; Youngsteadt-Parish, Denise; Robinson, Dwan
Source: *New Advocate,* v12 n1 p89-103 Win 1999
Publication Date: 1999
ISSN: 0895-1381
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Reference materials--Bibliographies (131); Reports--Descriptive (141)

Describes 19 children's books (published between 1196 and 1998), in categories of poetry, picture books, participation books, chapter books for older readers, and nonfiction. Discusses them in tandem with landmark books to reflect on social and historical contexts and to help teachers talk with children about the enduring images and changing perspectives that affect their views of themselves and others. (SR)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; Elementary Education; Multicultural Education; Nonfiction; Picture Books; Poetry; Reading Material Selection; Reading Materials; Social Change; Social Influences

EJ596110 SO531752
Title: **Multicultural Picture Books: Perspectives from Canada.**
Author(s) Bainbridge, Joyce M.; Pantaleo, Sylvia; Ellis, Monica

Source: *Social Studies,* v90 n4 p183-88 Jul-Aug 1999
Publication Date: 1999
ISSN: 0037-7996
Document Type: Guides--Classroom--Teacher (052); Journal articles (080); Reports--Descriptive (141)

Conveys that multicultural children's literature can support and encourage tolerance and understanding among children. Presents information about multiculturalism in Canada and gives criteria to help teachers select multicultural literature. Suggests a number of picture books that may be used to encourage positive attitudes toward difference at all elementary grade levels across the curriculum. (CMK)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Differences; Cultural Pluralism; *Diversity (Student); Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; Reading Material Selection; *Social Studies; Student Attitudes
Identifiers: *Canada

EJ594691 CS757970
Title: **Ten International Books for Children.**
Author(s) Yokota, Junko
Source: *Journal of Children's Literature,* v25 n1 p48-54 Spr 1999
Publication Date: 1999
Notes: Theme: A Global Perspective--Children's Literature in an International Context.
ISSN: 1521-7779
Availability: Children's Literature Assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, The Ohio State University, School of Teaching and Learning, 333 Arps Hall, 1945 North High Street, Columbus, OH 43210-1172.
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Reference materials--Bibliographies (131)

Presents a 10-item annotated bibliography of unfamiliar international novels and picture books set in contemporary times. Considers how international books offer children in the United States an opportunity to read the best texts and view the best illustrations of books published abroad. Seeks to balance representation across various countries and discusses where to look for recommendations of international books. (SC)

Descriptors: Annotated Bibliographies; *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Awareness; Elementary Education; *Illustrations; *Multicultural Education; *Novels; *Picture Books

EJ594687 CS757966
Title: **Picture Books: A European Perspective.**
Author(s) Cotton, Penni
Source: *Journal of Children's Literature,* v25 n1 p18-27 Spr 1999
Publication Date: 1999
Notes: Theme: A Global Perspective--Children's Literature in an International Context.
ISSN: 1521-7779
Availability: Children's Literature Assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, The Ohio State University, School of Teaching and Learning, 333 Arps Hall,

1945 North High Street, Columbus, OH 43210-1172.
Document Type: Guides--Non-classroom (055); Journal articles (080)
Journal Announcement: CIJMAY2000

Describes the author's experience sharing picture books with children from different countries while she absorbed the stories, language, and culture. Discusses the recent emergence and popularity of the picture book with its polysemic nature, interdependency of picture and text, universality of themes, and its potential to speak across nations. (SC)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Awareness; Elementary Education; Ethnic Relations; *Illustrations; *Intercultural Communication; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books

EJ583490 CS757083
Title: **Cultural Diversity + Supportive Text = Perfect Books for Beginning Readers.**
Author(s) Opitz, Michael F.
Source: *Reading Teacher,* v52 n8 p888-90 May 1999
Publication Date: 1999
ISSN: 0034-0561
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Reference materials--Bibliographies (131)
Journal Announcement: CIJNOV1999

Offers brief annotations of 21 picture books that address cultural diversity while offering language that supports beginning readers. Includes a chart noting which language features that support beginning readers are part of each book. (SR)

Descriptors: Annotated Bibliographies; *Beginning Reading; *Childrens Literature; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; Primary Education; Reading Material Selection; Reading Materials

EJ580324 PS528970
Title: **An Exploration of the Uses of Children's Books as an Approach for Enhancing Cultural Diversity.**
Author(s) Pardeck, John T.; Pardeck, Jean A.
Source: *Early Child Development and Care,* v147 p25-31 Aug 1998
Publication Date: 1998
Notes: Special Issue on "Children and Diversity."
ISSN: 0300-4430
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Reports--Research (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJSEP1999

Offers strategies for using children's books as tools for teaching able-bodied children about the unique needs of children with disabilities and how disabilities are an important aspect of cultural diversity. Notes five genres for conducting bibliotherapy: fiction, nonfiction, self-help books, fairy tales, and picture books. Provides an annotated list of children's books focusing on the topic of disabilities. (JPB)

Descriptors: *Annotated Bibliographies; Bibliotherapy; *Childrens Literature; Cultural Differences; *Disabilities; Elementary Education; Fairy Tales; Fiction; *Multicultural Education; Nonfiction; Picture Books

EJ569667 UD520834
Title: **Who Belongs Here? Portraying American Identity in Children's Picture Books.**
Author(s) Steiner, Stanley F.
Source: *MultiCultural Review,* v7 n2 p20-27 Jun 1998
Publication Date: 1998
ISSN: 1058-9236
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Reports--Descriptive (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJMAR1999

Provides examples of children's literature that can be used to begin dialogs on issues of similarities, differences, prejudice, exclusion and inclusion, violence, and social justice. Picture books chosen for broad appeal and multiple uses, even with older students, are described. (SLD)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; Dialogs (Language); Elementary Education; Interpersonal Communication; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; Preschool Education; *Racial Bias; *Violence
Identifiers: Similarity (Concept); *Social Justice

EJ562410 CS755223
Title: **Visiting South Africa through Children's Literature: Is it Worth the Trip? South African Educators Provide the Answer.**
Author(s) Labbo, Linda D.; Field, Sherry L.
Source: *Reading Teacher,* v51 n6 p464-75 Mar 1998
Publication Date: 1998
ISSN: 0034-0561
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Reports--Research (143)
Journal Announcement: CIJOCT1998

Shares South African educators' perspectives on 17 selected picture books about South Africa. Finds that they highly recommend these books. Offers their comments and cautions about the extent to which these books accurately portray life in South Africa. Offers suggestions for teachers who want to use such books to promote awareness and appreciation of the perspectives of other cultures. (SR)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; Cultural Differences; Cultural Pluralism; Educational Research; Elementary Education; *Foreign Countries; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; *Teacher Attitudes
Identifiers: *South Africa

EJ555288 CS754364
Title: **Reexamining the Issue of Authenticity in Picture Books.**

Author(s) Mo, Weimin; Shen, Wenju
Source: *Children's Literature in Education,* v28 n2 p85-93 Jun 1997
Publication Date: 1997
ISSN: 0045-6713
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Reports--Evaluative (142)
Journal Announcement: CIJMAY1998

Examines picture books portraying Asian societies as a means to discuss the criteria of authenticity (not simply nonstereotypes) in both the literature and artwork of picture books. Discusses authenticity and cultural acceptance in terms of both story selection and adaptation, authenticity and cultural conventions (in terms of value implications), and authenticity in artwork. (SR)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; Cultural Differences; Cultural Pluralism; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethnic Stereotypes; Multicultural Education; *Picture Books
Identifiers: Asian Culture; *Authenticity

EJ540752 CS753195
Title: **Issues of Representation: Caldecott Gold Medal Winners 1984-1995.**
Author(s) Albers, Peggy
Source: *New Advocate,* v9 n4 p267-85 Fall 1996
Publication Date: 1996
ISSN: 0895-1381
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Opinion papers (120); Reports--Evaluative (142)
Journal Announcement: CIJAUG1997

Investigates Caldecott-award-winning books in an attempt to determine whether they attend to the pluralism and democracy that schools strive for. Finds that representations of people of color and females continue to reify cultural stereotypes. Discusses ways readers might become more sensitive to gender, class, and ethnic issues. (TB)

Descriptors: *Childrens Literature; *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Differences; Democracy; Elementary Education; Ethnic Stereotypes; *Females; Feminism; *Multicultural Education; *Picture Books; Sex Stereotypes

EJ537371 CS752796
Title: **Simple Lessons from Multicultural Children.**
Author(s) Cunard, Joanne
Source: *Reading Horizons,* v37 n2 p143-54 1996
Publication Date: 1996
ISSN: 0034-0502
Document Type: Journal articles (080); Opinion papers (120); Reports--Descriptive (141)
Journal Announcement: CIJJUN1997

Discusses designing, initiating, and collecting observational data from a program designed for a multicultural inner-city kindergarten classroom to teach emergent literacy, to use picture books representing children's cultures, and to share responsibility for children's own learning by freely initiating interactions with print materials. Notes that the school system, once public, was purchased by a private company. (RS)

Descriptors: Cultural Differences; *Emergent Literacy; Inner City; Instructional Effectiveness; *Multicultural Education; Picture Books; Primary Education; Program Design; Program Implementation; Urban Education; Whole Language Approach

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ECRP
Early Childhood
Research &
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ERIC/EECE News

ECRP

For this issue of *ECRP*, you'll notice that the pages have been slightly redesigned for easier reading, navigation, and printing.

You'll also notice that we have added a feature for searching the *ECRP* Web site. This feature is available at http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/cgi-bin/texis/webinator/ecrp/ecrp2search/.

Redesign of the ERIC/EECE Web Site Becomes Public

We are pleased to announce the redesign of the ERIC/EECE Web site (http://ericeece.org). The graphic look of the site has changed, but all the information and resources from the old site are still available. Most pages have been updated, and some new resources have been added. Please check out our new design! Look for these additions and features on the ERIC/EECE site:

FAQs

A new section of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (and their answers!) is available on the Web site. The FAQs are compiled by members of the ERIC/EECE User Services staff. FAQs currently available include:

- Academic Redshirting
- Classroom Placement of Twins
- The Early Childhood Education Curriculum Debate: Direct Instruction vs. Child-Initiated Learning
- Full-Day Kindergarten
- Homework: Amount, Effects, Help for Students and Parents
- Kindergarten Entry Skills

Major Publications

An earlier ERIC/EECE print publication (from 1997), *Child Development Knowledge and Teachers of Young Children* by Lilian G. Katz, has been uploaded to the Web site in full text. This publication can be found at http://ericeece.org/pubs/books/childdev.html.

Part 1 of the book defines what is meant by the term child development and shows how to apply child development knowledge. Part 2 defines the developmental approach to early childhood education and outlines some principles of a developmental approach to curriculum.

Digests

Several new ERIC/EECE Digests are now available in the Digests section of the ERIC/EECE Web site:

- *Recent Research on All-Day Kindergarten* by Patricia Clark (HTML | PDF)
- *Working with Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Families* by Deborah A. Bruns & Robert M. Corso (HTML | PDF)
- *Perspectives on Charter Schools: A Review for Parents* by Saran Donahoo (HTML | PDF)
- *Focus on After-School Time for Violence Prevention* by Peggy Patten and Anne S. Robertson (HTML | PDF)

Resource Lists

ERIC/EECE staff have also revised several Resource Lists that are now available in the Resource Lists section of the ERIC/EECE Web site:

- Bullying in Schools: Resources
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- Native Americans: Recommended Books and Resources
- The Project Approach
- Scheduling at the Middle Level

National Parent Information Network

Response to September 11 Tragedy

In response to the tragedy of the terrorist actions on September 11, the staff of the National Parent Information Network (NPIN) compiled a list of resources on "Talking about Terrorism, Ttragedy, and Resilience: Resources for Parents, Teachers, and Family Support Professionals." This resource is available at http://npin.org/library/2001/n00578/n00578.html.

Two new issues of *Parent News,* the bimonthly parenting magazine of the National Parent Information Network (NPIN), have been published since the last issue of *ECRP.* These issues are available on the NPIN Web site:

- *Parent News,* May-June 2001, volume 7, number 3
- *Parent News,* September-October 2001, volume 7, number 4

Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Child Care

The staff of the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), ERIC/EECE's Adjunct Clearinghouse on Child Care, has also compiled a list of resources on "Helping Children Cope with Violence, Terrorism, and Grief." This list is available at http://nccic.org/helpkids.html.

Web Partners

Two of ERIC/EECE's Web partners, whose Web sites were formerly maintained on ERIC/EECE's Web server, have now moved their sites to new domain names:

Wheelock College Institute for Leadership and Career Initiatives
http://institute.wheelock.edu/
This Web site provides information and resources related to professional development in early childhood education.

California Child Care Health Program
http://www.childcarehealth.org/
This Web site provides information and resources on children's health in child care centers, focusing on—but not necessarily limited to—the state of California.

We hope you'll continue to visit our partners' Web sites and support their efforts. Check out our other Web partner sites at http://ericeece.org/eeceweb.html.

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